

HYUNDAI A-LEAGUE FINALS WEEK 2
PLUS WESTFIELD W-LEAGUE AND NATIONAL YOUTH LEAGUE

HYUNDAI
A-LEAGUE



THE **Full 90**

OFFICIAL PROGRAM INSIDE

**FINALS
SPECIAL**

AUSTRALIAN

Football WEEKLY

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Issue 21
Feb 12 - 18 2009

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OGGY: WE CAN TURN IT AROUND!



SOS: CAN MARINERS SAVE THEIR SEASON?

SILENT ASSASSIN

**IS DANNY ALLSOPP THE
A-LEAGUE'S BEST STRIKER?**

EXCLUSIVE!

PLUS: JEDINAK TALKS TURKEY, PONDELJAK'S
ZINGER & CAN ANYONE STOP MAN U?



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AIG



Antoine & Stanley



David Hall: From the Editor

It's All Or Nothing

THERE it is. I've been looking for that all season. Was it behind the fridge or down the back of the coach? No, it was waiting for me in finals football all along.

What is it? Overt passion, something sadly missing in much of today's sport, was certainly in evidence in last week's semi-final first legs.

That first 10 minutes between Adelaide United and Melbourne Victory was thoroughly enjoyable, not least because of the instant tension between Sasa Ogdenovski and Kevin Muscat, two of the Hyundai A-League's most committed competitors.

Muscat set out to wind big Sasa up just a little bit, although that meaty tackle on the edge of his own area was probably a little more than he bargained for. The Melbourne skipper's response revealed everything, though.

In tempting Ogdenovski into an early yellow card, the Reds defender would have to watch himself for the rest of their tightrope encounter.

"Use your brain," Muscat seemed to

say. Sasa said everything you can with one finger.

On Friday night, another fiery individual got a bit more than he wanted. Danny Tiatto's two-footed challenge on Andre Gumprecht was awful, to say the least. Everyone knows what Tiatto's about and how much he'll give for his team, but a player with so much experience should

know better than to go flying in so wildly in such an important game.

But both these instances show how important finals football is to these players who will do anything to give their team the edge.

You love them when they're on your side and hate them when they're on the opposition, but the game would be worse off without them. Aggression, focused correctly, can be the difference between winning and losing. These men know that, and sometimes cross the line, but where would we be without players who give their all for the team and fans?

After all, isn't that what finals football is all about?



“ You love these players, that give their all, when they're on your side and hate them when they're on the opposition. ”

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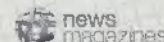
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Australian Football Weekly is published by News Magazines Pty Ltd (ACN 088 923 908), 170-180 Bourke Road, Alexandria NSW 2015. The Full 90 is published for Football Federation Australia by News Magazines. News Magazines Pty Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of News Limited (ACN 007 871 178). Copyright 2008 by News Magazines Pty Ltd. All rights reserved. 170-180 Bourke Road Alexandria NSW 2015. Tel: 02 9353 6666 Fax: 02 8082 2032 Postal Address: Locked Bag 5030, Alexandria NSW 2015

Advertising: Tel: 02 8082 2135 Fax: 02 8082 2032
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KICK OFF

Newcastle expanding ■ Adelaide out to change finals fortune ■ Kwasnik back on the Central Coast

NEWCASTLE REBUILD SQUAD

A busy week for Newcastle Jets, with recruitment for their maiden Champions League capped off by the signing of **ANGELO COSTANZO**

WITH THE DEADLINE for Asian Champions League fast approaching,

Newcastle Jets have been adding players to their squad in preparation. Experienced defender Angelo Costanzo is the latest addition to Gary van Egmond's team. The 32-year-old will join Jets once his current club, Adelaide United, have completed their season.

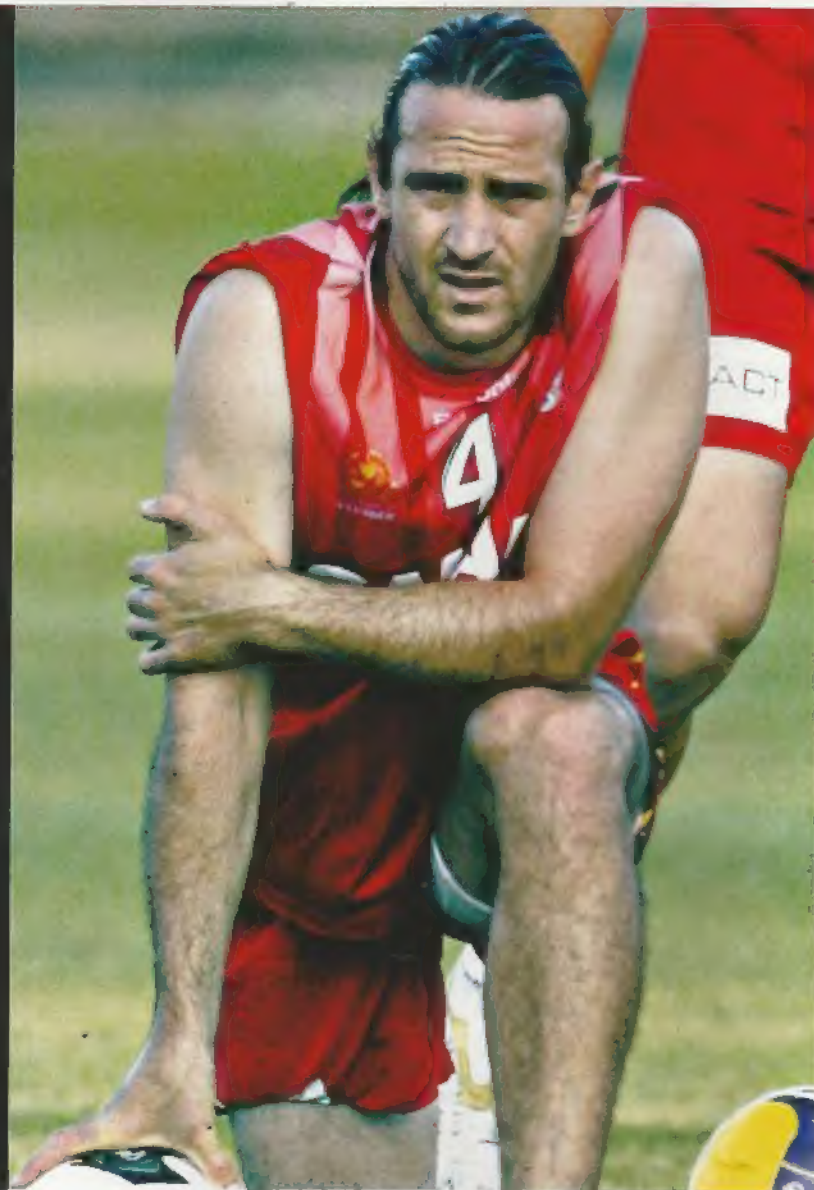
The competitive defender was a key part in the Reds reaching the grand final in 2007 and the AFC Champions League last year; experience that will be valuable for the Jets.

"Angelo is obviously a seasoned professional who will bring a great deal of experience and leadership to

our playing group," club CEO John Tsatsimas said. "We believe that he will complement the squad which we already have here in Newcastle, and the group we now have for the Champions League is a considerably strong one."

Ten players in the Jets' registered contingent for the new competition will be new additions brought into the team since season-end.

Sydney FC youngster Nikolas Tsattalos arrives on a six-month contract, and local players Mitchell Johnson, Peter Haynes and Joel Wood have also signed six-month contracts. Veteran Italian forward Fabio Vignaroli has also signed for a six-month period, who was most recently playing for Lazio in Serie A.



BRIDGE TO FACE MARINERS IN ACL

DESPITE MISSING OUT on finals football in his first year as a Sydney FC player, young talented striker Mark Bridge has completed a temporary move to Chinese team Tianjin Teda on a short-term deal for the upcoming AFC Champions League.

The 23-year-old completed a medical this week and will remain at the club for the next four months before rejoining his Sydney teammates at the start of July. Bridge is likely to make his debut for his new team when the Asian Champions League kicks off next month and could feature against Group H rivals Central Coast Mariners on March 18.

ADELAIDE OUT TO SHAKE "CHOKO" TAG

DON'T MENTION THE "C" word in the vicinity of Adelaide United. "Choke" is the word that United players and officials dread hearing after Adelaide again failed to win its 11th straight finals match.

Melbourne Victory kept Adelaide's ordinary finals record in the spotlight when they beat the Reds 2-0 in the first leg of the major semi-final at Hindmarsh last week. Incredibly, Melbourne have played all of their four finals matches against Adelaide, including three wins a draw and the 6-0 grand final hiding at the Telstra Dome in 2007. The statistics suggest finals football might get to the Reds squad.

Adelaide have been unsuccessful in eight Hyundai A-League finals appearances, plus the home and away AFC Champions League final against Japan's Gamba Osaka last November.

Adelaide's stranglehold on finals failure cuts even deeper when you pull up the club's NSL finals statistics. Adelaide last recorded a finals win in March 2004 when it beat South Melbourne 2-1 in extra time before it was smashed by Perth Glory 5-0 in the preliminary final.

So the losing finals tally streak is now up to 12. Reds fans will be clinging to the hope that history counts for nothing as the club prepares for yet another daunting trip to Telstra Dome.

KWASNIK RETURNS TO MARINERS

CENTRAL COAST MARINERS record-scorer Adam Kwasnik has returned to the club after one season with Wellington Phoenix. After a largely unsuccessful campaign across the Tasman, the 25-year-old rejoins in time for the up-coming Champions League campaign.



"It was with significant regret that we allowed Adam to leave for Wellington in the first instance, so it goes without saying that we're thrilled to welcome him back," said Mariners executive chairman Lyall Gorman. "Adam's contribution was crucial to our qualification for the AFC Champions League and it's only fitting that he gets a chance to take part in this tournament, where I'm certain we'll see him return to his best form, which made him such a favourite of our supporters for three seasons."

"I'm thrilled that everything has worked out the way that it has and that I've been given the chance to return to the Central Coast and to the Mariners, where I've enjoyed three very memorable seasons previously," said Kwasnik. "My time in Wellington was also very enjoyable... but this opportunity to come back to the Mariners was one that was simply too good to pass up."

SIGMUND ENJOYS REST PERIOD

WITH THE OFF-SEASON in full swing for A-League teams that missed out on the play-offs, the players are now left to enjoy some free time after a busy schedule. Wellington Phoenix defender Ben Sigmund has just finished his first full season as a professional footballer and the 27-year-old said it's been a dream come true.

"It's awesome. It feels like I should be getting up and going to work. I've been chasing season-to-season with Auckland City and either playing in the winter for another club, trying to keep me ticking over," he said.



When Sigmund was playing as a semi-professional he was working in sales and marketing for a paper company in the morning and then training in the afternoon. He said the lifestyle was taxing, but now he can really enjoy a good break.

"I'm just trying to make the most of it and actually enjoy the time off."

That enjoyment may be cut slightly short because in a few weeks Sigmund will be going under the knife for surgery on a dodgy hip that will leave him on crutches for six weeks.

OGNEVSKI SHOWS PASSION

THE CLASH BETWEEN Ogenovski and Muscat in last week's clash was the sort of aggression expected in finals football. "It was good," Ogenovski said of the tough tackle he put on Muscat early. "I was trying to get the team thinking a bit more aggressively. I had a little clash with Muscat and the fans like it. A bit of passion early on, a bit of adrenaline pumping through the veins."

The defender might have got a yellow card for his troubles, but he takes it all in his stride.

"The FFA like to clamp down on anyone who says anything, or who goes outside the square; I think the game needs characters. The crowds love characters like Kevin Muscat and Danny Tiatto. I think the league needs more of it."

WIN! SEMI-FINAL TICKETS

HURRY, HURRY, HURRY! Thanks to Football Federation Australia, AFW has got hot, hot tickets to this weekend's semi-finals and the following preliminary final burning a hole in our pockets and we need to shift 'em. Interested?

First up, this weekend: we have one family pass (four people) to see Melbourne Victory v Adelaide United at Telstra Dome, and Queensland Roar v Central Coast Mariners at Suncorp Stadium, but you have to get onto us quick.

If you can make it to either of these games, email footballweekly@newsmagazines.com.au, with the subject "Semi-Final Tickets" and tell us in 25 words or less why you deserve to go more than anyone else. Entries for the Roar-Mariners tickets must be in by 10am, Friday, February 13; entries for Victory-United tickets by 4pm at the latest.

Obviously we can't tell you who's going to be in the preliminary final, but if you have a good feeling about your team, pick up a copy of *Australian Football Weekly* next week for all the details.



FFA SUPPORT FOR BUSHFIRE VICTIMS

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA (FFA) have given a donation of \$100,000 to the Red Cross Bushfire Appeal along with other measures to show support for the communities affected by the devastating bushfires in Victoria.

"Everyone in the entire football community shares the disbelief at not only the tragedy in Victoria, but the scale of it," said FFA CEO, Ben Buckley. In addition to the cash donation, FFA will also provide replacement football equipment to schools and junior football clubs that have lost equipment in the bushfires.

Players will wear black armbands this weekend as a mark of respect to those lost in the fires.

"We want to let them know that everyone involved in football is thinking of them," said Buckley.

There will be a minute's silence at both semi-finals and there will be collections at both games. FFA, the Hyundai A-League finals teams and *Australian Football Weekly* urge fans to give generously to support those affected.

SMALL TALK

● Queensland Roar are aiming to become only the second A-League team to win six home matches in a row this Friday. ● The Central Coast Mariners will be aiming to turn their luck around this weekend after a four match losing streak (all matches). ● Melbourne Victory recently created a new A-League record of winning six home matches in a row. ● Adelaide United are aiming to halt a four match losing streak against the Melbourne Victory. No current A-League club has lost more than five consecutive matches against another club before.



PAUL TRIMBOLI: IN THE CUT

Memorable Moments

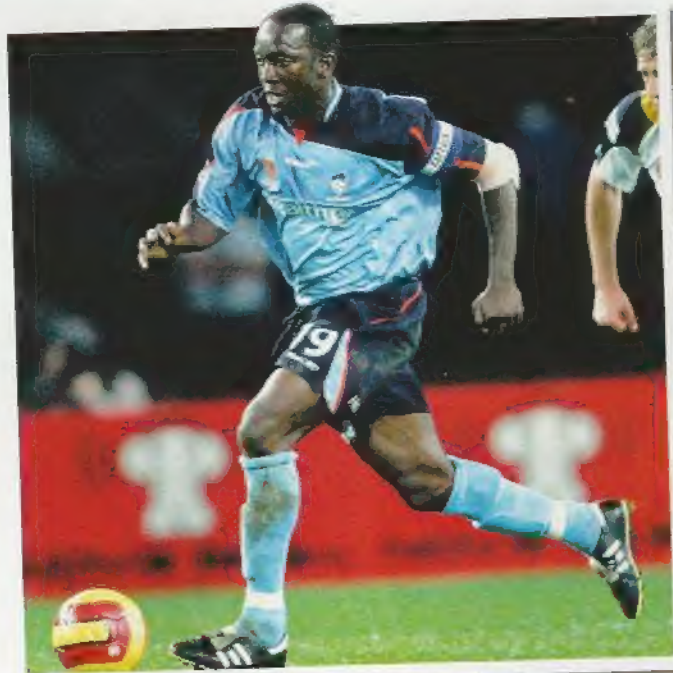
There have been some classic Hyundai A-League finals football moments that have the ability to leave a mark on your memory forever

FINALS FOOTBALL AFFORDS the opportunity to create a memory that either induces sheer pleasure or endless heartache. Moments that, if they occurred in any regular season game, would be mused upon for a week or two and then replaced or forgotten. Whether the superstar player, the fringe squad member or the precocious youth, in finals an individual can write their name in the history books and earn the lifelong gratitude of the fans.

As I looked forward to this weekend's games, and the drama that will unfold, I took a moment to reflect on previous finals campaigns and some of the moments that are still etched in my mind.

I can still picture Dwight Yorke, Sydney FC's architect supreme. He dribbled deep into the Mariners penalty area and drew three defenders toward him. With sure touch, and absolutely no hint of panic, he refused to blaze away and waited what seemed an eternity before rolling a perfectly weighted pass into the path of a most appreciative Steve Corica, who buried the ball in the bottom corner. It was the winning goal in the inaugural grand final, created by the only true marquee player to thus far have graced the pitches of the A-League.

And who could forget James Robinson, the Melbourne striker who hadn't scored all season? It was getting desperate for Victory as the away goals rule had them down and out. As a free kick was whipped in from the left he held his ground at the back of the six yard box as all those around him were drawn to the contest. As the ball flicked up off the challenge at the near post it was almost as if the play entered slow motion. Robinson's looping header angled its way over a helpless Daniel Beltrame and nestled into the corner of the Adelaide goal. It was in the 92nd minute of the match and the moment that altered the destiny of the 2007 title.



Who will step up and become cherished in the eyes of their fans? Who will, this year, become the image you will never shake?

Then the atmosphere at EnergyAustralia Stadium last year on preliminary final day was electric as Jets were out to win through to the grand final for the first time. Having conceded in the final minute to go to extra time it was Tarek Elrich who defied mental and physical fatigue to seal the result with one of the

great finals goals. The ball was moved elegantly through midfield via Song, Bridge and then Joel Griffiths. As Griffiths advanced on the tiring Roar defence he saw Elrich suddenly appear to his right. After almost two hours of football the fullback dug deep and had sprinted an incredible 80 metres, then with the composure of a seasoned goal scorer he took one touch and smashed the ball into the roof of the net past a flailing Liam Reddy, sending the Hunter club to their destiny.

So, as the competition becomes cutthroat and the pressure builds, who will step up and become cherished in the eyes of their fans? Who will, this year, become the image you will never shake?

There will be someone and they'll be remembered forever. I can't wait to find out...



CHALK BOARD

With Fox Sports' ANDY HARPER



Tinkering with the tactics

A reshuffle may be the way for Adelaide United to stop the Victory flow

PLENTY OF QUESTIONS still swirl out of Hindmarsh after last weekend. Accepting that Hyundai A-League coach of the year, Aurelio Vidmar, has deliberated on those players that are best ready for semi-finals football, I'm going to suggest that a re-tinkering of the on-field 11 may have helped the Reds' cause.

Adelaide did look good until Carlos Hernandez opened the scoring for Victory, but they also still looked a tad stretched when going forward, plus the back-door didn't look quite locked and the laneway thereto looked undermanned.

When playing well, Victory's transition into attack is lightning quick. Hernandez will pick up, or receive, possession whereupon his instinct is to split the defence. He is the best in the league at doing that. Aiding and abetting him are the league's most mobile and lethal attack, Archie Thompson and Danny Allsopp. Both will traverse the waiting defensive line, arcing their run before puncturing that line, and Hernandez will slide the ball into their path. But there are variations too: Ward, Celeski, Ney Fabiano, Pondeljak etc. If Hernandez et al. have the space and time then opponents are in for a harrowing time.

With Melbourne in this sort of touch, I was waiting for Adelaide to play an extra screening midfielder to assist Paul Reid. The space behind the front line was where Melbourne won the ascendancy and set the trend. Vidmar opted for a two-striker formation, for good reason, but with Hernandez running riot and blood dripping from the fangs of Thompson and Allsopp, I'd have moved Travis Dodd back to the flank and Fab Barbiere next to Reid, at least until the haemorrhaging stopped.

Now Adelaide's task is to show that the wounds inflicted were of the flesh, not mortal, kind.

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GAME ON

Jamming with the All Sorts ■ Pret-a-Joel-Porter ■ Feeling finals with fans ■ Cracking games of the season



FIVE MAD MINUTES WITH...

TOM PONDELJAK

Victory's midfielder is getting the band together, dining with former PMs and in no hurry to welcome Man Utd to Telstra Dome

G'Day Tom. Got any holidays planned for the offseason yet?
The team's got a trip booked to Thailand. Sydney FC have gone there, too; who knows. We might bump into them. I also heard the Queensland Roar boys might be there too... Hopefully if they are we can all catch up; it'd be good.

If you were to set up a four-piece band of Victory players, who'd be singer/guitar/bass/drums?
Oooh, that's hard... Bass guitarist is usually a little bit on the quiet side, so I'd have to put Dan Allsopp in there. Lead guitar is a bit more of a show pony, so I might have to stick Archie in there. Drummer likes to be seen but is always in the background so Roddy Vargas would do a good job there... **Theoklitos might have more rhythm and be more coordinated with his hands though, seeing that's his job on the pitch...** Yeah, I was thinking the same, it's a toss up between the two of them...

But Roddy has the hair to throw about while thrashing the drums... That tilted the scales in his favour. **And the singer?** I'll stick Ney Fabiano up there, he's got a good presence about him with his bald head and all the rest of it.

What's the name of the band?
[Laughs] All Sorts. **What three people – dead or alive – would you invite round for a dinner party?**
I'd have to say Eddie Murphy; he's one of my all-time favourite comedians and actors. **EDDIE!** [Said in a loud Murphy-esque voice.] Hahaha. I'd need a female... Who can I throw in there for a bit of eye candy? Jessica Alba!

Lining-up against someone like Ronaldo you'd have to keep the Panadol in your pocket – marking him would give you a headache.

And I'd thrown Johnny Howard in there, just to see how he gets along with Eddie Murphy. **That would be interesting. If we set up a match between Victory and Man United at Telstra Dome what's the score going to be?**
To be honest, probably about 7-0 to Man United. **Come on, Tom...** They're quite a deadly side and if you have to line up against someone like Ronaldo you'd have to keep the Panadol in your pocket because marking him would give you a headache. Maybe 5-0, no 5-1 – we'd get a consolation. **What's the first thing you'd do if you won the lotto?**



To be honest, I'd probably drive my car straight through the front door of my house.

Superb! That's the most original answer we've had all season... Are you as excited as us about the return to the menu of the Zinger Tower at KFC?

I like my Zingers, so I'm definitely going to have one. I just passed through KFC about 30 minutes ago but didn't get one because I didn't see it on display – I'll have to get my hands on one next time I go through the drive-thru.

Finish these sentences:

Kevin Muscat's penalties are...

[Long pause...] Brilliant.

My teammates would say I am...

A greyhound. That's my nickname because when I take my shirt off my ribs start showing like a greyhound, and my skin folds are the lowest at the club so they keep harping on about me looking like a greyhound. **I think AFW is...**

A truly great magazine.

Couldn't agree with you more Tom, good luck in the finals.

DROP BALL THE AFW DEBATE

Can Central Coast save their season at Suncorp?



Yes, they can

First up, let's examine the facts: in their three games during the regular season, the teams have won one, lost one and drawn. Mariners even managed to put four past the much-vaunted Roar defence at Suncorp in round three. Granted, both sides' form has changed since, but after this season does anyone believe Central Coast don't have it in them to overturn a 2-0 deficit over 90 minutes? In Matt Simon and Sash Petrovski they have two of the most troublesome strikers in the league, and if they can put keep the pressure on the Roar midfield to defend, rather than push forward, the Suncorp curse could return.

Nope, 'fraid not

Going back to that round three clash is a weak argument. That was, like, years ago in footballing terms and now Queensland are on fire at home and playing such confidence, which Mariners are not. It's a mighty difficult task for McKinnon's men and might be one comeback too many. The onus isn't on Roar to go out there and win, and with their pace out wide and mobility in midfield they can wait for their moment to hit. And hit it will. Mariners will have a go, as they always do, but they just don't seem to be playing like they think they can. Roar, however, have confidence and belief in abundance and are desperate to go further than last year's preliminary finals exit.

What do you think?

Yes? No? Those're the choices. Vote at www.foxsports.com.au

Last week: Should Sydney FC have sacked John Kosmina?

FO' SHO 69%

NO SUH 31%

FOX SPORTS

WIN! A KENNEDY-SIGNED PUMA BOOT

THERE'S NOTHING WORSE than being cut down in your prime by injury, but with the v-Konstrukt III from Puma, those dreams can still fly free because it's specially designed with a Heel Impact Guard. What's that you ask? It helps prevent heel and Achilles injuries; plus is suitable for Australian surfaces, so you'll be ready to get out there and power it home. If blinding speed is more your forte though, then pull on Puma's extreme lightweight v1.08 – not even Usain Bolt could run you down.

Want one of these boots, signed by Aussie striker Josh Kennedy, to sit among your greatest memorabilia? Well we have one of each to give away. Tell us in 25 words or less: "Whose footy boots would you steal and why?" Send your answers to footballweekly@newsmagazines.com.au. Entries close Feb 23.



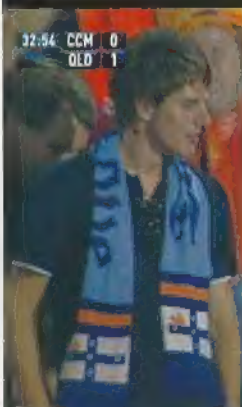
FOX SPORTS FINALS MAGIC MOMENT

It's a timeless story, we've all heard before. Ball meets player. Player meets Danny Tiatto. Danny Tiatto meets sky. Both of Danny Tiatto's feet meet ball/player. Player meets ground. Danny Tiatto meets red card. And to think we gave him a Good Week last issue. Tsk tsk.



WATCH THIS!

The first 10 minutes between Melbourne and Adelaide was like the first half hour of *Saving Private Ryan*. The brutal meeting of Muscat and Ognenovski left AFW shaking in its stubbie holder. Kev was happy to tell him he should've thought it through; Oggy's response? We can't publish it, but we loved the passion. Relive the filth and the fury: www.foxsports.com.au/football/video/0,,A-League_10920,00.html



GOOD WEEK

STATE RIVALRY

You know something special is happening when Sydney fans throw their support behind a Queensland team. The sight of two Sydney FC fans cheering for Roar against the Mariners was either a touching sporting gesture or an indictment on NSW rivalries. Or perhaps both.



BAD WEEK

LOVED ONES

When AFW loses a match, we go home, slam doors, drain bottles, stare aimlessly into the fridge hoping for a nice surprise and generally act like nongs to those who could offer us comfort. So spare a thought for the loved ones in Adelaide and the Central Coast. They deserve better.

VIRTUAL INSANITY II

WITH THE HYUNDAI A-LEAGUE NEARLY SORTED, AFW TURNS TOWARDS THE EPL RUN-IN...

There are 14 rounds left in the EPL season, that's 140 games, surely you can't predict all those correct? Well, maybe not you, but AFW has a footballing brain the likes of which the world has never seen. Think Nostradamus meets Les Murray... Our crystal ball, after sorting through the A-League finals last week, has cast its gaze on the EPL to see who will be where come the end of the season. Yes, we've predicted the results of all 140 remaining EPL games and, yes, we have too much time on our hands, but it's all for football science. Are we on the money or way off? Let us know at footballweekly@newsmagazines.com.au.



AFW'S PREDICTED FINAL EPL LADDER

	P	GD	PTS
1. Manchester United	38	44	86
2. Liverpool	38	33	82
3. Chelsea	38	43	80
4. Arsenal	38	25	75
5. Aston Villa	38	18	67
6. Everton	38	-1	52
7. Wigan	38	-2	51
8. West Ham	38	-2	50
9. Manchester City	38	5	48
10. Tottenham	38	-2	45
11. Portsmouth	38	-12	45
12. Fulham	38	-2	44
13. Newcastle	38	-14	43
14. Blackburn	38	-14	41
15. Stoke City	38	-17	41
16. Sunderland	38	-18	41
17. Middlesbrough	38	-19	41
18. Bolton	38	-14	37
19. Hull	38	-24	37
20. West Brom	38	-28	33

* Next week: AFW predicts the global financial market for 2010...

READY TO RETURN

■ WORDS David Dawulovic ■

After signing on with Gold Coast United, **JOEL PORTER** is determined to feature in the Hyundai A-League goal charts and earn his place in the Socceroos fold again

You were close to returning to Wellington last season, why didn't that eventuate?

I had a funny contract. Basically it expired, but Hartlepool had the option of extending it by a year and unfortunately, or fortunately, after the season I've had, they decided to keep me even though I didn't want to stay. But it hasn't worked out too bad this season, having scored 16 goals, so I guess things happen for a reason. **With all due respect to Wellington, you must be pretty happy with the way things have panned out, now you'll be living on the Gold Coast.**

At the time the Wellington deal was a great deal and I was looking forward to it. They were looking to the future, trying to build a solid team and push for the top four. It didn't work out but they came in again recently, as well as the Gold Coast. It just so happened that the Gold Coast deal was better not just for me but for the family also.

You've been in the UK a while now, was this the breakthrough season for you?

Last year I only played half the season. The first half of it I was starting on the bench, coming on for the last 20 or 25 minutes. I started to establish myself in the second half of the season and that's when the goals came. But I've definitely come of age this season. But I feel it's time to come back and put back into the Australian game what I've learnt here.

Gold Coast have created quite a buzz in the last few months, particularly with the acquisition of Jason Culina; you must be excited to be joining such an ambitious club.

From what I hear the club's expectations are to be up there from the start, which is one of the reasons I decided to go there. I knew they were chasing Jason and it's great that they've got him. He's been great at

PSV and it was a big decision for him to come back, but it will be great to play alongside him. Hopefully with him and Shane Smeltz up front we can make a formidable partnership.

What are your own expectations and what have you set yourself as targets?

I've got aims to take Gold Coast into the top two, and everyone sets targets. When I go out every pre-season I set myself a target and when I come back I'll certainly have targets, both team and personal ones.

Are you capable of challenging Smeltz for the golden boot award?

I think a few people in our team will be capable of scoring lots of goals; they've signed some great players and on paper it's a very good team, as long as Miron gets us gelling together. Shane was top scorer this season so he's capable of doing it, hopefully I can provide him with some and he can return the favour.

You have four Socceroos caps, are you realistically hoping to add to those?

Being so far away and not being in the top league you don't get the high-profile recognition that most of the other overseas boys get, but hopefully scoring goals in League One has given the coach (Pim Verbeek) something to think about – but we do have some great strikers playing in Europe so I've got to be realistic.

Playing back in the A-League will give me more of a profile. I've had no correspondence regarding the Socceroos, but I don't regret what I've done over here. I tried to come here and get my profile up, but injuries set in and I lost touch with the Australian team and it's been a battle trying to be recognised again.



VIEW FROM THE STANDS



Queenland Roar v Central Coast Mariners



Name: David McDaniel **Location:** Queensland

What are your thoughts after the first leg?

I'm over the moon; we didn't play that well but we still got a good result. Were you worried by the start the Mariners made?

It was a good start from them and I was nervous, but I had confidence that our guys could hold on and get them on the counter-attack. That's pretty much what happened.

Do you think they might have been nervous early because of what you saw in the free-flowing Roar performance like in round 19? Yeah, but there was also a sliding error in a game that was on this one, nerves might have had something to do with it. I think you'll find Evans had told them they'd come in hard at the start and to knuckle down and hold them out and go from there.

Central Coast won 3-2 at Suncorp this season; what are you expecting this week?

The 11 we've got and, in here, a confidence game with them, whereas our guys are on an incredible winning streak. I'm worried about the loss of McKinnon and I have no prediction for the second leg. I think it'll go 2-1 our way.



Name: Ben Mackie **Location:** Point Clare, NSW

Not a good start for the Mariners, what was it like watching the game?

It was frustrating. I thought we were in trouble. Queensland scored the first goal and the mistake we made after that was the same as in the past few weeks.

What has happened to the Mariners form recently?

I think it's a matter of attitude, the players don't look overly motivated to be there. You're not in position, they're more worried about the ACL, they didn't look as keen to play.

What change can Lawrie make, if any?

It's difficult... We need to tighten up, especially around the midfield, which was a happy last weekend.

Should Mariners play a front three again?

Perovic should definitely start. If we can start with three up front and the players are more ball-hungry in the middle and back we should be alright, but there needs to be intensity rather than positional changes. Are you confident?

Not entirely. Realistically, I think we'll score a goal but I'll say it'll be a draw. The Mariners will get a bit more pride but that'll be the end of the season of us and can start looking forward to the ACL.



Melbourne Victory v Adelaide United



Name: Blue & White Brigade **Location:** Melbourne

Victory looked quite comfortable against Adelaide, did you ever get nervous in the first half against the defending, among supporters and before, in relation to leading up to the game, nervous of defeat? We believed that we wouldn't lose the game. Is it overconfident to suggest Melbourne could walk over Adelaide this week? I don't think so. Supporters are clearly planning for the home game final on the 28th, so I think the confidence on the scores hasn't translated to the squad that's expected. What do Victory fans think will happen this week?

The Victorian community have really been the focus of not just the media, but has been more about organising, fighting culture in those who have lost their lives, and those brave men and women who are out there on the front lines. It has been a dark week for our state. It really has highlighted the unity among all Victorians. Saturday night will not only be a time for celebration, because we think we'll win, but also a night of remembrance. Who would you prefer for the grand final? Adelaide. As hard as they try, they just can't seem to find the right formula to challenge us. We march so well against them.



Name: Oli Young **Location:** Adelaide

Victory looked quite comfortable this game, do you have confidence in your team's confidence as seen in the end of the game and going into the starting 11? I respect them, but I don't understand him going against players against a young young defense line in Agosin's case or against Hernandez, Thompson and Alkassab. I think it's a bit of a battle between Muscat and Ognjenovic.

What do you think of the battle between Muscat and Ognjenovic? I think it was just a case of two singles of the round ball having leads, neither was about to backed down but I was surprised to see Ognjenovic that far up when he brought Muscat down for his yellow.

What do you think Viddy could have done differently? Honestly, this is the source of my frustration. Viddy has a single game plan that worked most of the year, and through the ACL, a strong defensive line, tight controlled midfield play and a target forward supported by attacking midfielders, trouble is everyone can see it now and is playing to it, there seems to be no plan B. What do you think will happen next week?

We'll put on a better display than this week. Maybe sneak a low score draw.



**CENTRAL COAST MARINERS
V QUEENSLAND ROAR
BLUETONGUE STADIUM
FEBRUARY 6 • 2009**

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MINOR SEMI-FINAL 2ND LEG
QUEENSLAND ROAR v
CENTRAL COAST MARINERS

15



VICTORY MARCH

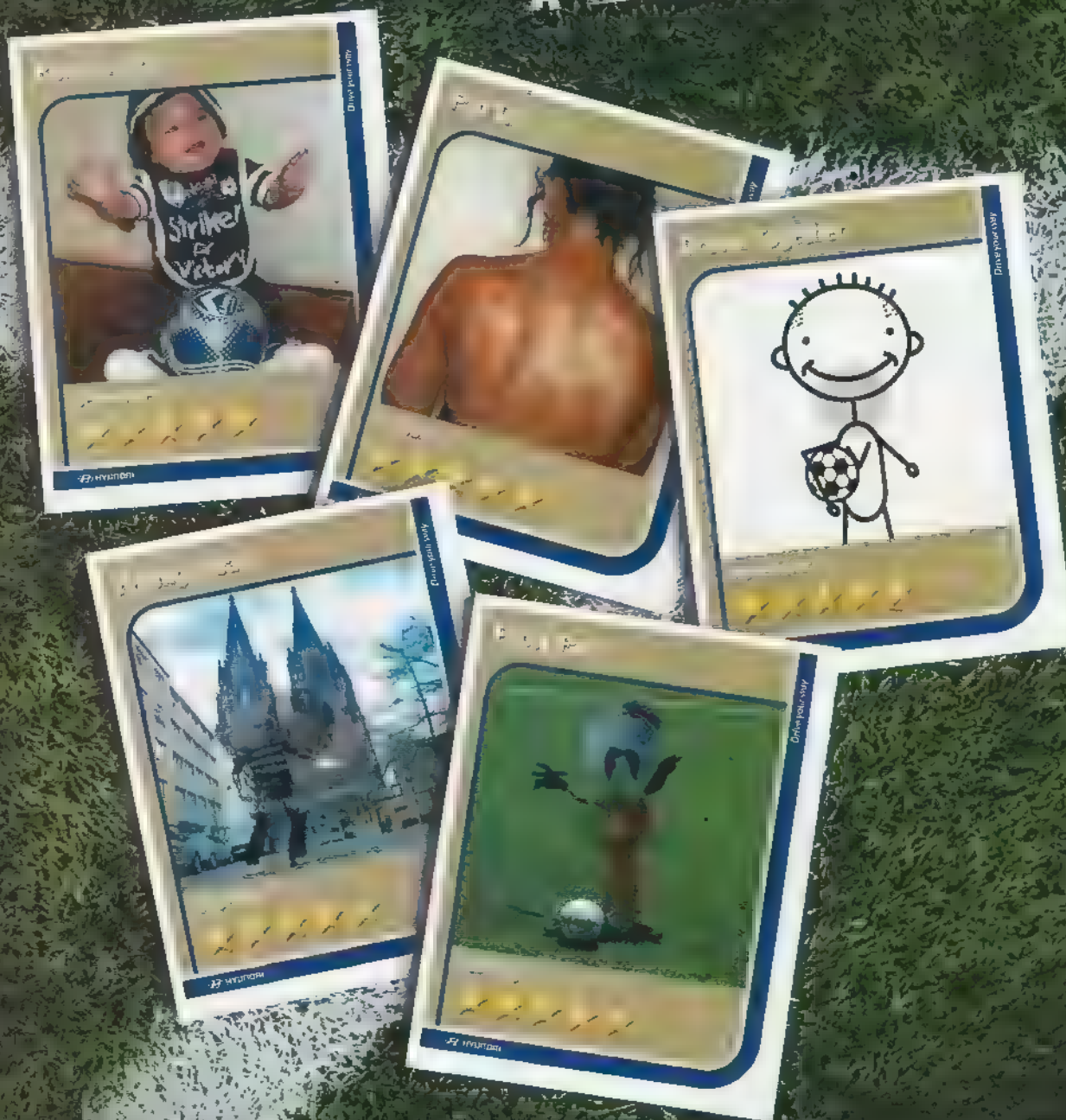
MAJOR SEMI-FINAL 2ND LEG
MELBOURNE VICTORY
v ADELAIDE UNITED

20



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MINOR SEMI-FINAL

FRIDAY, 7.30pm, 13/02/09
SUNCORP STADIUM



Queensland Roar



Central Coast Mariners



Hanging By A Thread

It's advantage Roar at the halfway point of the minor semi-final – but nothing can be taken for granted in the A-League –

QUEENSLAND'S 2-0 win at Gosford last weekend seems to have nearly taken them into the preliminary final, but Mariners have nothing to lose. An early goal for the visitors would set the cat among the pigeons.

Certainly it's Queensland's march to lose – continuing their undefeated run at Bluetongue last weekend and now looking to add to a recent run of five straight home wins. The loss of Danny Tiatto and Josh McCloughan is a blow and 2-0 can be a paradoxical advantage, leading to a feeling that the job is done, when the visitors only need one goal to be right back in the tie.

Mariners certainly have a glorious example to draw upon – in last year's major semi-final they went down 2-0 to Newcastle in the first leg before a rousing 3-0 triumph at home saw them into the grand final. This time, though, they must do it on the road, against the backdrop of passionate Suncorp support.

🔴🔴 **The rematch of Minniecon v Heffernan is eagerly awaited. Minniecon comfortably was the victor in round 19, even Heffernan conceded he was ripped to shreds.** 🟡🟡

AT HOME

The absence of Tiatto and McCloughan robs Frank Farina of two elements of the team's experienced spine and gives the coach two major holes to fill. Tiatto's one-match ban for the two yellows he picked up at Bluetongue Stadium was just another chapter in a disciplinary record that



stretches out like a biblical epic – and his reaction to the second caution, with teammates having to drag him away and persuade the veteran to leave the pitch, was in the spotlight all week.

A groin tear is behind McCloughan's absence, with a recovery prognosis of at least two-to-three weeks. Even the grand final might be pushing it, and the centre-back knows his finals series is all but over. McCloughan's

partnership with Craig Moore has been a major factor of Roar's sensational second half to the season and it is no wonder Queensland made such an effort to whisk Moore back as fast as possible from his international duties with the Socceroos in Tokyo this week.

It'll take more than jetlag to hold the captain back, with Luke DeVere expected to slot in alongside him in McCloughan's place. ▶

THE VISITORS

Nothing Lawrie McKinna has done in recent weeks has managed to halt his team's ill-timed slump, and desperate times tonight will surely lead to desperate measures. They were unlucky in the first leg last week, especially in the first half, having the better of possession and chances but falling to a couple of sucker punches. But in a way that was no surprise – with confidence lacking, the moments of inspiration and half-chances aren't being grabbed.

With McCloughan out McKinna will be tempted to augment his front line and hit the Roar early, with Matt Simon and Dylan Macallister both strong in the air.

Sasho Petrovski, only a sub last week, will be hoping for a recall if McKinna opts for 4-3-3 – a narrow structure that would allow John Hutchinson to sit in holding midfield where Mile Jedinak's absence grows starker by the week. The Coast's generosity in letting him pursue a career in Europe is increasingly making them look like nice guys who won't come first. One of the key men – Adrian Caceres, Macallister or Simon – has to fire if that is to be disproved.

Nothing McKinna has done in recent weeks has managed to halt his team's ill-timed slump.

KEY BATTLES

Arguably the biggest takes place off the park: who out of Farina and McKinna can instil in his team the belief that this is their night? Farina must avoid complacency, while McKinna's famed powers of inspiration will have to be at their most acute.

On the flanks, the rematch of Tahj Minniecon v Dean Heffernan is eagerly awaited – Minniecon comfortably was the victor in round 19 when the Roar stormed away from Gosford with a 4-3 win. Even Heffernan conceded he was "ripped to shreds" then by the speedy youngster, and he'll want revenge this time.

Then there is the match-up of Matt McKay and Hutchinson – the latter a scrapper who likes nothing more than the chance to wind up an opponent. With McKay nursing a broken nose from the first leg, an interesting bet might be the early minute in which Hutchinson will first test his opponent's beak with a discreet tweak.

With Mariners forced to go for broke, DeVere's ability to cope with Macallister and Simon – giving inches away to both in height terms – will determine the efficacy of the visitor's aerial attacks.

MEN TO WATCH

Liam Reddy (Roar)

The fiery custodian set the tone for the Roar in the first minute of the first leg with a sprightly save from Macallister, justifying Farina's decision to pick him over Griffin McMaster. Reddy's always been one of the best shot stoppers in the league and his power and height allow him to claim much that comes at Queensland. Yet, he has a combustible air that has landed him in hot water before, and Mariners won't be shy of testing his temperament.



Dean Heffernan (Mariners)

A frustrated spectator in the first leg through suspension, the attacking left-sider wants to make amends so badly for the daft dismissal in round 20 that put him on the sidelines. Having fought his way back from a broken leg that ultimately cost him a year out, Heffernan is still feeling his way in terms of speed and positioning.

But from year one when his eight goals were a major reason Central Coast made the grand final, to his return last season, his presence works both ways in that it always adds a huge threat to their attacks and acceleration to the defence.

FINAL SCORE

Queensland 1-0 Mariners
 Queensland's first goal in the first half was a brilliant strike by Dean Heffernan. But his two goals in the second half were equally impressive. Heffernan's goals were the only ones of the night. Mariners' goalkeeper Liam Reddy made a number of good saves to keep the Mariners in the game.

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League position: 3rd
 Played: 22
 Won 11
 Drawn, 6
 Lost 5
 Goals For 38
 Goals Against 25
 Leading goalscorer,
 Sergio van Dijk 12
 Shots on goal 15
 Fouls conceded 14 5
 Tackles 29 5
 Effective tackles 64%
 Passes complete: 268
 Passing accuracy 77%
 Crosses 71
 Corners 51
 Goalkeeper saves 2

Played, W, L, D, 6 1 2 3
Leading goalscorer.
S Van Dijk 5
Goals scored 19
Last time: L 4-2

\$1.80 win
\$3.70 draw
Odds courtesy of TAB Sportsbet

P	G	A	PTS	Player	PTS
18	0	2	0	Liam REDDY (GK)	1
12	0	5	0	Andrew PACKER	2
13	0	1	0	Luke DEVERE	3
21	2	4	0	Craig MOORE (C)	4
6	2	3	0	Josh MCCLOUGHAN	5
8	0	3	0	David DODD	6
21	1	3	0	Michael ZULLO	7
22	0	1	0	Massimo MURDOCCA	8
21	12	2	0	Sergio VAN DIJK	9
17	7	2	0	Charlie MILLER	10
5	3	1	0	Tahj MINNIECON	11
1	0	0	0	Chris GROSSMAN	12
5	0	0	0	Ben GRIFFIN	13
22	4	3	0	Matt MCKAY	14
12	0	0	0	Hyuk-Su SEO	15
1	4	0	0	Mitch NICHOLS	16
19	1	6	0	Danny TIATTO	17
2	0	0	0	Isaka CERNAK	18
4	0	0	0	Griffin MCMASTER (GK)	19
5	1	1	0	Tommy OAR	20
4	0	0	0	Robbie KRUSE	21
9	0	0	0	Tim SMITS	23

Frank FARINA

	P	G	A	S
1 Matthew NASH (GK)	17	0	1	0
2 Andre GUMPRECHT	12	1	0	0
4 Pedj BOJIC	21	0	7	0
5 Bradley PORTER	22	0	4	0
6 David D'APUZZO	8	0	1	0
7 John HUTCHINSON	21	2	3	0
8 Dean HEFFERNAN	6	0	1	1
9 Nik MRDJA	15	2	0	0
10 Adrian CACERES	21	2	2	0
11 Dylan MACALLISTER	18	4	2	1
12 Greg OWENS	1	0	0	0
13 Paul O'GRADY	8	0	1	0
15 Andrew CLARK	12	0	5	0
16 Nigel BOOGAARD	11	0	1	1
17 Matthew OSMAN	18	1	0	0
18 Alex WILKINSON (C)	22	0	2	0
19 Matt SIMON	20	11	6	0
20 Danny VUKOVIC (GK)	17	0	1	0
21 Ahmad ELRICH	3	0	0	0
22 Sasho PETROVSKI	21	6	4	0
25 Nathan SHERLOCK	0	0	0	0
27 Brady SMITH	0	0	0	0
28 Matthew LEWIS	1	0	0	0

Lawrie McKINNA

League position: 4th
 Played: 22
 Won: 7
 Drawn: 7
 Lost: 8
 Goals For: 35
 Goals Against: 34
 Leading goalscorer:
 Matthew Simon, 11
 Shots on goal: 140
 Fouls conceded: 169
 Tackles: 27
 Effective tackles: 66%
 Passes complete: 220
 Passing accuracy: 74%
 Crosses: 5
 Corners: 67
 Goalkeeper saves: 2

Played, W, L, D: 6, 2, 1, 3
Leading goalscorer:
A Kwasnlik, 3
Goals scored: 11
Last time: W, 4-2

\$3.50 win
\$3.70 draw
Odds courtesy of TAN Sportbook

ON TARGET				OFF TARGET				CORNERS				FOULS			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16

HALF-TIME

FULL-TIME

ON TARGET				OFF TARGET				CORNERS				FOULS			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16

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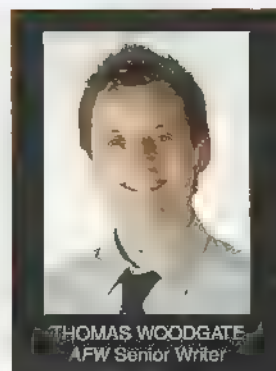


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MAJOR SEMI-FINAL

WEDNESDAY, 7.30pm, 14/02/09
TELSTRA STADIUM



THOMAS WOODGATE
AFW Senior Writer

Melbourne Victory



Adelaide United

All About Momentum

With home-form on their side, Victory will see this as an ideal opportunity to cement their current position as front-runners for the Hyundai A-League crown

THE mutual respect these two clubs have for each other was clearly on display last week, especially in the opening five to 10 minutes where the game's intensity and speed befitted the occasion. Trading shots, literally, the top two teams in the country really went for that early advantage.

But it was Melbourne who emerged with a very handy 2-0 advantage to take back to Telstra Dome, where a positive result will see the grand final head to Victoria. Adelaide haven't made gaining grand final hosting rights easy on themselves, but the Reds have been written off many times this season, home and abroad, and their responses have always been positive. How the team deals with their misfiring performance from leg one, as well as Melbourne seemingly being their bogey team – four games, four Melbourne wins – will tell the story this match.

Adelaide's season isn't over if they fail to overturn the deficit and if it comes to it, at least will have their preliminary final on their home turf. Their performance here is all the more significant because they'll want to prove that should they cross paths with Melbourne again in the grand final, they will be able to triumph.

Mentally, this game is so important for both teams and for differing reasons: for Melbourne, it's continuing the six consecutive wins they have had at home and securing the home grand final; whereas for Adelaide it's to prove they can overcome the hoodoo Melbourne have on them this season.

AT HOME

Arguably the most consistent team at home in the Hyundai A-League this season, Melbourne Victory are a team that know what it takes to win games when at Telstra Dome. Buoyed by their fanatical support, they have the backing and platform to cement their advantage in this tie and get the job done.

At Hindmarsh it was all about the attackers. Their movement and interplay was a joy and they were able to provide the edge and difference in the game. Hernandez



in particular had probably his most effective game for Melbourne in a long time and his vision, skill and ability to thread balls and dictate play was the perfect tonic for the front two of Thompson and Allsopp.

Thompson, who was at the centre of a lot of the good close-passing, was a menace throughout and was unlucky to not get on the scoresheet himself: having blasted one wide and denied by both posts via a superb fingertip save from Adelaide's Galekovic. Allsopp, too, has been really hitting his straps in the past few weeks – his goal was all confidence. Not only out-muscling Ognenovski, but having the presence of mind to stay on his feet and instinctively drill the ball home for an important second goal was all about a player that knows what he can do.

Between the three of them they remain one of the deadliest attacks in the league. How Hernandez pulls up from representing Costa Rica midweek will be interesting.

With Celeski, Pondeljak and Ward in support, it's a very attack-minded team that won't change its philosophy regardless of whether the game is home or away.

At the back it was business as usual with Muscat and Vargas in form; indeed, the former was involved in many of the game's flashpoints, but remains in excellent form for Victory.

THE VISITORS

Vidmar knows that for Adelaide there's a second bite at the cherry should they not achieve the necessary result here. This game could be as much about setting out their stall for the grand final as it is progressing directly there, but the motivation will still remain to host the big event itself, as well as an extra week to prepare that awaits the victors.

In the two team's last domestic meeting, a 1-0 win for Melbourne at Telstra Dome, it was a close encounter and the Reds pressed hard in the second half without being able to break through. But the point is it was close. Adelaide have every chance of getting a result here, but they'll need to stop Victory scoring and they'll have to penetrate a defence that's looked extremely solid at home. Not impossible, but difficult.

Adelaide will need to press high up the pitch and not give the Victory midfield time to put their foot on the ball and start spraying it about the pitch.

To overturn the deficit they're going to need goals, so starting with top-scorer Cristiano along with the physical presence of Paul Agostino is a good start. With these two playing close together they'll have the physical aspect as well as Cristiano's pace and ability to unsettle backlines. Melbourne's defence is very good at bringing the ball out and supplying it to the midfield quickly, so Adelaide will need to press high up the pitch and not give the Victory midfield time to put their foot on the ball and start spraying it about the pitch. I think Dodd should be moved out wide right to utilise his pace and directness at the Victory fullbacks.

Down the left side are Cassio and Jameson and their jobs will be to push up tight on the Victory backline, getting in behind and supplying ammunition for the front two.

With Melbourne's midfield getting so much joy in the first game, Barbiero should drop a little deeper to be alongside Reid as the anchors in the midfield. As Melbourne play a lot through Hernandez down the middle, blocking his route to Aillsopp and Thompson is important and the two screening midfielders will make that more difficult.

At the back it's good news with the return of Cornthwaite from a hip injury to partner Ognjenovski and it will take a top performance from these two to keep the red-hot attacking force of Aillsopp and Thompson at bay.



KEY BATTLES

With Melbourne getting so much joy through the middle in the first leg, the way Reid, and whoever anchors the midfield with him, combat the threat of Hernandez, Celeski, Pondejak and Ward's support of the front two will be important. Stifling the Melbourne attack, as well as providing service for the wide players will be the job of those two and from there it's a case of turning defence into attack as quickly as possible as Melbourne like to regularly commit players forward. There's an opportunity to stretch Victory if the midfield has pushed forward and with Cassio and Dodd out wide they have a great chance to get service into the front two quickly.

MEN TO WATCH

Carlos Hernandez (Melbourne Victory)

How he pulls up after playing for Costa Rica will be crucial, but if he plays with the same spring in his step that he did last week he'll take some stopping. Showing

form and fitness at just the right time, he's one of the league's best in his position and his hard to contain as he proved last week.

Travis Dodd (Adelaide United)

You know what they say: cometh the hour, cometh the man, and for Adelaide to be successful here they need a big performance from their captain. He needs to galvanise the team and spur them to believe they can overturn this deficit and still host the grand final in South Australia.

FINAL SCORE

Adelaide United 1-0 Melbourne Victory
 Adelaide United lead the grand final series 2-1
 after losing games to Melbourne because
 even if they don't overturn the deficit here
 they'll need confidence to go on to (likely)
 win from Queensland in the grand final before
 they can be facing Victory again in the grand
 final. I think the game will end up a draw.



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Melbourne Victory Notice Board

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Please note entry is subject to capacity.

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Tonight there will be one minute's silence prior to the start of the game between Melbourne and Adelaide to commemorate those that have been lost in the recent bushfire tragedy. 2,000 tickets have also been offered to the families affected by the fires and the fire fighters and other emergency services workers. Victorians are asked to give generously as cash collections take place on the concourse and throughout the stadium this evening.

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UPCOMING VICTORY EVENTS

**Hyundai Motor Company Australia, proudly presents,
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When: Friday 27 February, 12.30pm

Where: Peninsula at Central Pier, 161 Harbour Esplanade, Docklands

Cost: \$130

Victory Medal Night, proudly sponsored by The Age

Walk the red carpet and celebrate with the team as Melbourne Victory's season concludes with the naming of the club's 2008/09 Victory Medallist.

When: Friday 6 March 2009, 7pm

Where: Peninsula at Central Pier, 161 Harbour Esplanade, Docklands

Cost: \$165



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Melbourne Victory

Versus

Adelaide United



SEASON 2008/09 OVERVIEW

League position: 1st
 Played: 22
 Won: 13
 Drawn: 2
 Lost: 7
 Goals For: 41
 Goals Against: 27
 Leading goalscorer:
 Daniel Allsopp, 12
 Shots on goal: 147
 Fouls conceded: 145
 Tackles: 289
 Effective tackles: 68%
 Passes complete: 2381
 Passing accuracy: 78%
 Crosses: 49
 Corners: 56
 Goalkeeper saves: 25

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: W, L, D: 6, 4, 1
 Leading goalscorer:
 A Thompson, 6
 Goals scored: 23
 Last time: W, 1-0

ODDS

\$1.75 win
 \$3.70 draw
 *Odds courtesy of TAB Sportbet

DATE: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14 VENUE: TALSTRA DOME KICK-OFF: 7.30PM (LOCAL) LIVE ON FOX SPORTS 1
 TV COMMENTARY: (AUS) BRUCE WATSON (AUS) ALEX GARGANO (AUS) DENIS BUI

P	G	■	■	
19	0	0	1	Michael THEOKLITOS (GK) 1
22	5	4	0	Kevin MJSCAT (C) 2
16	0	0	0	Michael THWAITE 3
2	0	0	0	Steven PACE 4
8	0	1	0	Sebastian RYALL 5
0	0	0	0	Steve PANTELIS 6
21	0	4	1	Matthew KEMP 7
8	2	1	0	Grant BREBNER 8
22	12	2	0	Danny ALLSOPP 9
18	1	0	0	Archie THOMPSON 10
17	8	0	1	Ney FABIANO 11
22	2	3	0	Rodrigo VARGAS 12
0	0	0	0	Nathan ELIASI 13
22	1	2	0	Billy CELESKI 14
20	1	0	0	Tom PONDELAK 15
19	3	1	1	Carlos HERNANDEZ 16
16	0	0	0	Jose Luis LOPEZ 17
8	0	0	0	Leigh BROXHAM 18
14	0	4	0	Evan BERGER 19
4	0	0	0	Mitchell LANGERAK (GK) 20
0	0	0	0	Daniel VASILEVSKI 21
16	2	2	0	Nick WARD 22

COACH

Ernie MERRICK

		P	G	■	■	
2	Robert CORNTHWAITE	17	2	5	0	
3	ALEMAO	19	2	1	0	
4	Angeio COSTANZO	12	0	3	0	
5	Michael VALKANIS	6	0	1	0	
6	CASSIO	14	4	3	0	
7	Lucas PANTELIS	11	2	1	0	
8	Kristian SARKIES	11	1	0	0	
9	Paul AGOSTINO	8	0	0	0	
10	CRISTIANO	22	8	2	0	
13	Travis DODD (C)	21	7	2	0	
14	Scott JAMIESON	22	0	5	0	
15	Jonas SALLEY	15	0	1	0	
16	Daniel MULLEN	10	0	0	0	
18	Fabian BARBIERO	16	1	3	0	
19	Sasa OGNENOVSKI	2	3	6	0	
20	Eugene GALEKOVIC (GK)	19	0	0	0	
21	Jason SPAGNUOLO	10	0	1	0	
22	DEGO	8	0	1	0	
24	Paul REID	19	1	2	0	
25	Robert YOUNG	12	0	1	0	
30	Mark BIRGHITT (GK)	3	0	1	0	
70	Cody LARKIN (GK)	0	0	0	0	

COACH

Aurelio VIDMAR

SEASON 2008/09 OVERVIEW

League position: 2nd
 Played: 22
 Won: 11
 Drawn: 5
 Lost: 6
 Goals For: 31
 Goals Against: 21
 Leading goalscorer:
 Cristiano, 8
 Shots on goal: 127
 Fouls conceded: 151
 Tackles: 27
 Effective tackles: 68%
 Passes complete: 2711
 Passing accuracy: 78%
 Crosses: 51
 Corners: 45
 Goalkeeper saves: 36

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: W, L, D: 6, 1, 4, 1
 Leading goalscorer:
 T Dodd, 6
 Goals scored: 14
 Last time: L, 1-0

ODDS

\$4.00 win
 \$3.70 draw
 *Odds courtesy of TAB Sportbet

ON TARGET				OFF TARGET				CORNERS				FOULS			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16

HALF-TIME

FULL-TIME

ON TARGET				OFF TARGET				CORNERS				FOULS			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16

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A TALE OF TWO KEEPERS

Often the forgotten position on a team, Queensland Roar's **LIAM REDDY** and **GRIFFIN MCMASTER** are engaged in an intriguing battle for Suncorp's No. 1 spot

WORDS

WHEN I played under-10s football as a kid I was always a goalkeeper. Why? Well, to be honest, it was the one position where nobody wanted to play, so I always got a game. I don't need to be a sub, no need to worry about squad rotation because, generally, no one wanted the job.

In professional football, though, the general rule is you have your no. 1 with an understudy, usually a young up-and-comer who waits patiently for a chance. Being a goalkeeper is a lonely position. Sometimes, you're the last person to prevent opposition scoring after all, but when you're the understudy, you're even more lonely because you get limited game time and you have to be patient.

At Queensland Roar, though, there's been an interesting goalkeeping dilemma emerge between No. 1 Liam Reddy and his understudy Griffin McMaster, who performed so well in Reddy's recent three-game absence through injury that there's now slight competition for the starting spot, and it's something some media commentators have noticed.

With finals football approaching coach Frank Farina chose to reinstate Reddy over McMaster even though the young 'keeper had deputised so diligently. Squad rotation is expected in a football team, especially these days, but when it involves goalkeepers it strikes debate because of how rarely it occurs.

"I think I was more to do with the central journalist up there who likes to beat up a story," Reddy says. But still, beyond the story he's referring to, it did make for an interesting discussion point: do you drop a player who's technically done nothing wrong when on the pitch for a more experienced one in an important game?

The answer for Farina was yes, and when quizzed on the choice before the Mariners game last week the coach was blunt with his response.

"Liam Reddy will start. It's just my choice," Griffin's disappointed, but in the end of the day, "I've got to make a decision and that's my decision."

Reddy's clean sheet and four important stops (including tipping Paul O'Grady's goal-bound header onto the bar in spectacular fashion) proved his manager's instincts right and the stopper was pleased, as well as relieved, to be back in action after a four-week absence.

"It wasn't the best time to get injured, and Griffin did a good job when he came in, but it was satisfying to get back in the team and keep a clean sheet," Reddy says of his forced absence. "Hopefully I'll get another clean sheet this weekend and we move on and push for a grand final."

"It was definitely good to get out there and more satisfying too because it was a semi-final and an important game for us and we got a great result."

Obviously I would have loved to jump out on the field too and put the jersey on, but I guess that's just the way the cookie crumbles.

— Griffin McMaster



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As an understudy, the majority of games you're involved in are spent on the substitute's bench, but it was a different experience for McMaster this time because it came after a run in the team something the 'keeper hadn't experienced before.

"This time round it was obviously disappointing to miss out and be dropped, but the other side of the coin is I know I have come a fair way in the two seasons at Queensland so there was also a positive spin on it," he says.

The honest assessment has only spurred the young 'keeper on in his development under Liam Reddy. "It's all part of your footballing education," McMaster says. "It can only have a positive effect on me."

"Of course you want to show disappointment internally and nobody wants to be dropped, but what can you do about it? The only way to really show the coaches is to come back stronger and work harder on the training paddock."

It's this added determination McMaster now has having missed first-team action that is also spurring on the club's current No. 1. Training is a little bit more intense in the last few weeks, Reddy says. "Pressure is always a good thing and there's been pressure there for me to get my spot back. I'm happy that he's been playing well and that he's applying pressure on me and making me play better."

You can say that for the whole squad, though, because we all want to play semi-finals football and when players are injured we've got other players to fill in the gaps.

Pressure is always a good thing and there's been pressure there for me to get my spot back. I'm happy that he's been playing well and making me play better.

— Liam Reddy

If you're going to make the final end of a season, the series you need a squad."

Farina agrees. "I think Liam has learned a good lesson out of what's happened," he says. "He has seen the Griffin is breathing down his neck and he's really taken sharpened him up as well."

Griffin has done really well. It's good to have two goalkeepers who you know can do the job for you."

With a motivation to do better than last year's preliminary finals exit, the competition for places across the board is producing the goods on the pitch right now for Queensland Roar. Better still, and especially in the case of Reddy and McMaster, it's also shaping up to be an interesting battle next season for that starting berth between the posts for Farina's team. **ff**

LEARNING CURVE

It would be understandable for McMaster to feel like last weekend's victory is somewhat bittersweet, but he remains philosophical about the situation. "It's great to see the team getting a good advantage into the second leg," he says. "Obviously I would have loved to jump out on the first leg and to put the fans on but I guess that's the way the cookie crumbles."

THE SILENT ASSASSIN

Quiet, **DANNY ALLSOPP** may not make the headlines but he's firing Melbourne to victory yet again this season

WORDS Dominic Johns

EVERY season has a story; an outstanding player who defines the moments of the competition. Who's done it this year in the Hyundai A-League? Shane Smeltz at Wellington Phoenix? Charlie Miller at Queensland Roar? It's a good bet no one said Danny Allsopp.

The big Melbourne Victory forward has hardly hogged the headlines this season; he rarely seems to draw eyes, and when he does, he's softly spoken and never seems comfortable in the spotlight.

And yet during his time at Melbourne, Allsopp has been one of the A-League's best strikers. In the all-time records, he sits just three goals behind teammate Archie Thompson; he won the Golden Boot in season 2006/07, and this year looks set to overtake Shane Smeltz, as Melbourne continue their run beyond the regular home-and-away season.

This term, Allsopp has popped up time and again to score vital goals for Victory, yet alongside the exuberant Thompson, his quiet demeanour means he deflects attention much in the same way he did

Adelaide United defender Sasa Ogencnovski in last week's major semi-final first leg. Does that lack of attention mean he goes about his game without the constant pressure to score?

"I don't think I don't ever feel under pressure at Melbourne," he says. "Sometimes you get judged pretty harshly and I don't think about it too much."

It's great playing with Archie because we have a good understanding up front and we know each other – but all the other teams know about us and it's not really a big surprise what they're going to get.

It's somewhat surprising that some fans are still not convinced of Allsopp's worth. It's true that when he's been in scoring form, as in the title-winning 2006/07 season, Melbourne have been victorious.

Typically, though, if you ask Allsopp about his own form, he shrugs it off.

"I've been pretty steady this year, I don't think there's been too many lows or real highs, just getting on with it and taking it week after week, so I think I've had a pretty good season so far."

Pretty steady? Pretty good? With 11

goals so far this season, surely there's more to it than that?

"My job's been different [this year], he says. "In season two I had to do a lot more. I was getting all round the place a bit more than this year, whereas we've got other players who do a lot more; my job has been made more simple, and that might have been in the past that I was trying too hard."

It would be easy to mistake this kind of response for nonchalance, but there is obviously more to Danny Allsopp than that the media will ever get to see. Twice this season we have seen part of the hidden personality: his shoulder charge into former Sydney FC coach John Kosmina in round 17, and his "quiet down" response to Adelaide fans after scoring Melbourne's late second goal last weekend.

A player would only do these when he has taken something personally, whether it be rivalry with the outspoken Kossie or ribes from a section of the crowd. He may not say much, but Allsopp's actions reveal much about the man.

Similarly, when Ogencnovski tugged on

his shirt before he scored that second goal, many players would have given in to the temptation to play for the penalty. Ogencnovski, already on a yellow card, would surely have been sent off had Allsopp milked the moment. Instead, he was more interested with winning the ball and putting away yet another decisive finish.

"I'll go down if it can't be helped," he says of the moment. "I don't think there's any place for milking it and trying to get people sent off, so it wasn't something I thought about. I was more concerned with getting in a front position, it did sort of cross my mind, but I realised it was a good chance to score a goal."

It's refreshing to hear that, because lots of players would have gone down.

A few people have said that, but that's just the way I am.

TEAM SPIRIT

There seems little doubt that Melbourne Victory boast one of the tightest squads in the A-League. They have a roster of players who have stuck with the club for a



“I don't think I ever feel under pressure at Melbourne. I've been pretty steady, just getting on with it week after week.”



number of years, and while other teams are suddenly being plundered from rivals and cashed-up Asian clubs, there are hardly any rumours surrounding Victory players. This doesn't mean offers haven't been made, but Victory, as usual, keeps everything on the club.

That was something we addressed as players, Allsopp reveals. “Whatever people are going to do next season... We're close as a team and no one wants to ruin it for anyone else with speculation or talk, so that's really a credit to anyone who won't be with us next season.”

Now 39, it must be on

returning to work with Ernie Merrick, who first coached him at the Victorian Institute of Sport.

“I've got another year on my contract and I'm really happy here and haven't given it any thought at all.”

Now even with all the talk of troubled waters for a stint in Korea or China.

“I haven't given it much thought,” he says. “It's difficult for the clubs to try and keep players, and the new teams want to get new players. I'm sure all the players give 100 per cent, regardless of where they're going to be playing next season. I haven't thought about

we still harbour ambitions to break into the first team for the 2010 World Cup.”

“My wife said to me a couple of years ago that I should aim for that, it'd be great, but I have to take it a step at a time. It was good to get a start for the Socceroos in Jakarta and hopefully I'll get another chance because I really enjoyed it.”

As usual, Allsopp quickly brings the conversation back to the present, and the one game standing between them and the grand final at the moment. Despite the excellent result in Adelaide, Victory players will be the first to tell you that the tie is far from over.

“We would have taken the 2-0 before the game any day of the week,” Allsopp admits, “but it's a great result over there and now we've got the rest of the job to do at home. Some people are saying it's already over but we're not looking at it like that, it takes one goal and it all changes again. The boys know what the

COMING TO A HEAD

ADALDIE UNITED have pushed the top games of Arsenal, Melbourne's year and made the test of Asia like a real one. Adelaide United is not a team, but a club, and it's not a club, but a team.

WORDS Sam Ashton

THERE was a time in the middle of the season when Aurelio Vidmar looked like a genius. Adelaide United were top of the Hyundai A-League and flying high in the Asian Champions League. They looked destined for glory.

But now, at the business end of the season, it's not harsh to say they still have everything left to prove. Their major semi-final defeat to Melbourne Victory was a deflating experience. Not for the first time in recent years, the Reds looked tired and lacking the spark that defined their early season form.

Two-nil down and with 90 minutes left to play, they're still in the game – but overturning that deficit around this week?

THE FIRST LEG

What happened at Hindmarsh Stadium had arguably needed to breakdown the stubborn Victory backline. It's a flaw of which the team are well aware.

"We were lacking that killer ball in the final third," Sasa Ognjenovski says. "Even though we had (Paul) Agostino and Travis (Dodd) up front, I don't think we used them to our advantage. They were making good runs but that final pass was letting us down."

Vidmar, too, knows where his team let themselves down in the match.

"We didn't do anything with the possession," he says. "The amount of ball we lost under pressured turnovers was guilty of that."

HOW TO FIX IT

Having lost four times to Victory already this season, Vidmar understands how Melbourne can punish teams. For the Reds to turn it around they need to improve the midfield's mobility to pick up those second balls, stretch the midfield and keep pressure on the Victory defence.

"We tried to," Vidmar says of the first game. "The problem is that as soon as you lose the ball in critical areas to a team like Melbourne, they have a lot of good players – Hernandez, Ward, Pondeljak, Cieslik – who can break at the drop of a hat."

Ognjenovski says it's about making the most of the forward players, something Adelaide have been lacking in recent games.

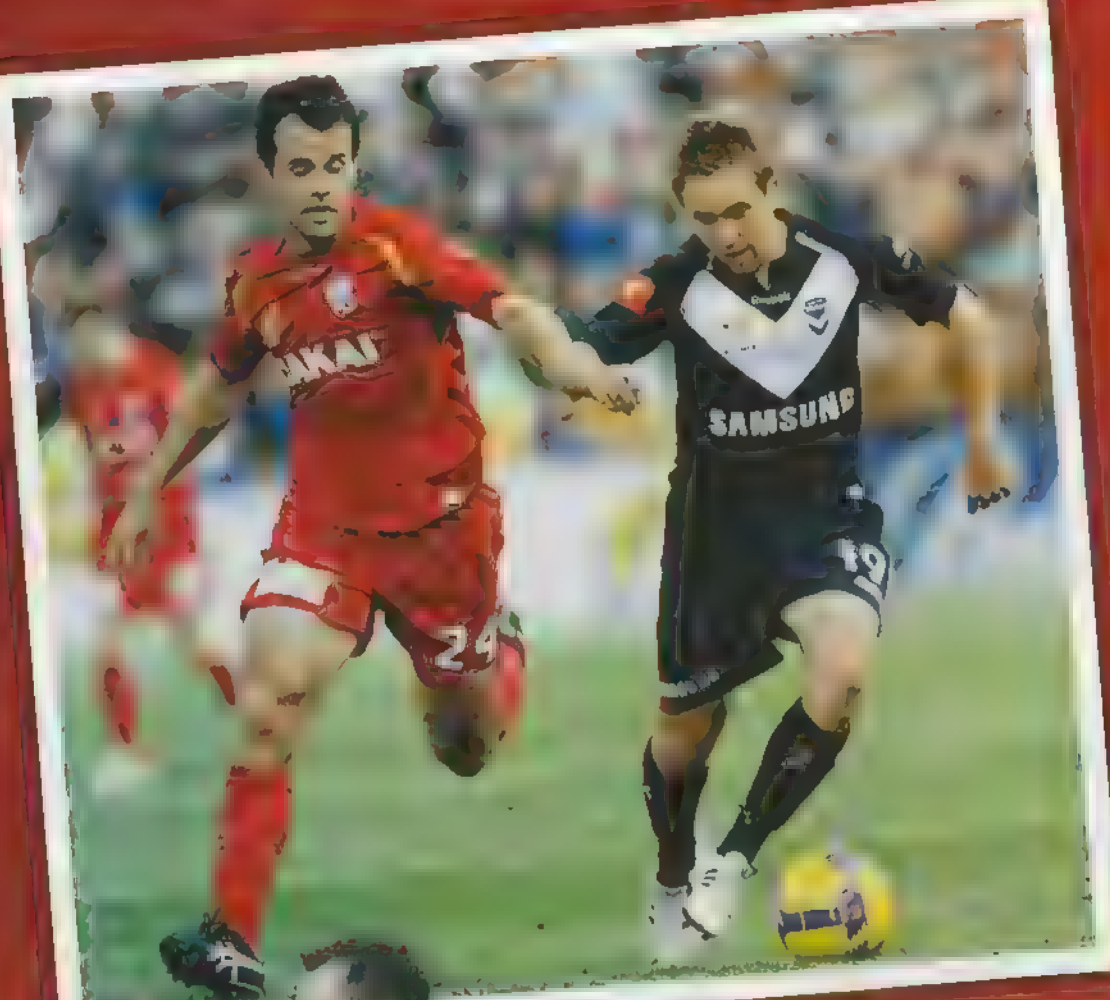
"We need to use [our strikers] a lot more; they're up front for a reason and they're not getting the deliveries. In the first half we had five or six crosses into the box and they went over their heads or right across the box."

PEAKED TOO SOON?

There is also a suggestion that Adelaide may have just reached their best form too early in the season. Their run when all the other teams were happily taking points off each other. But championships aren't won in a few games, and it's about timing your run to perfection.

"If you haven't got the adrenalin pumping for finals, when would you have it?" Ognjenovski asks. "I don't think we've scored too many goals of late. Give us something to defend and we'll do the job – but if you're not giving us anything to defend then it's difficult. If you don't score you're not going to win."





To their credit, no one at Adelaide points to their extended season as an excuse for their dip. For Vidmar it's simply part of the job.

"It has been a long season," he says, "and we all know that and we've dealt with it as best we could. The game two weeks ago against Central Coast we looked really

good. If you give the ball away cheaply the hardest thing is actually to chase it again; that's when you lose a lot of energy and it's unnecessary. It's an area we really need to work on this week.

TURNING IT AROUND

Much has been made of Melbourne's record over Adelaide this season: Adelaide have lost twice at Telstra this season, but both were only 1-0, and neither were bad performances.

If Vidmar can inspire his side, 90 minutes is a long time and despite the aura they have gathered of late, Melbourne are by no means unbearable. Ognenovski remains cautious.

"Two-nil is not that big a scoreline to turn back, [Melbourne], and they know that. We need to play a lot better to get the same result.

For the Adelaide players, the first-leg result should be a clear wake-up call. If that poor performance does not stir

"It's got to, and generally it does," Vidmar agrees. "We know the equation: we're two goals down in a two-

game. It's not easy, everyone has to rally together and stay tight. If we do that, anything's achievable." ■

EXPERT OPINION: PAUL TRIMBOLI



"Four losses from four attempts and only two goals scored while conceding eight. Not good reading, but all is not lost.

If Adelaide are to get back into this be and win the coveted home grand final they need to accomplish two things: firstly, they need to score three times against a Melbourne side that has kept three straight clean sheets. Secondly, they need to prevent Victory from scoring more than once, something that has only been done once since round 14. The good news is that it was the Reds who managed to do it.

Clean sheet: "The back four need to be far more compact. The fullbacks Mullen and Jamieson need to play closer to the central defenders Cornthwaite and Ognenovski and the holding midfielder Barbiero needs to sit in front to eliminate the passing channels that Melbourne exploited all-too-often through the pace of Allsopp and Thompson.

Score three times: "They need to play two wide players and two strikers. Reid needs to supply the flanks with plenty of ball. Then the pace of Dodd on the right and the combination of Jamieson and Cassio on the left can provide the much needed ammunition for Cristiano and either Agostino or Younis."

EXPERT OPINION: DR SANDY GORDON

SENIOR LECTURER
School of Sport Science, Exercise and Health, University of Western Australia

"History matters little in situations like this. People who believe history will play a part in results coming up are taking their focus literally, off the ball. What history does do is help teams like Adelaide focus on what they've learnt from previous encounters; not just on a team level but on an individual level. I hope Adelaide will focus on what works, rather than what didn't work.

"I know that traditionally football coaches, in particular, are focused on: 'Don't do this, don't do that.' Psychologically, though, Adelaide should focus on what did work in the past so they go into this game wiser from previous experiences. They've played well enough of late, the teams in the country, with the experience they've had overseas, they have a wealth of experience that most teams will never have. That's what they need to focus on.

"Okay, they lost games but they did some things right; they need to sit down and say, 'What did we do right, what did work, and how can we do that again?' If you focus on what didn't work, you're going to get really miserable. Whatever you focus on grows. If you focus on solutions, you'll get more of them; if you focus on problems, you'll feel like a real loser. You have to focus on what your strengths are and what you're bringing to the game. Adelaide, when they're flowing, are a very potent side, and that all comes from confidence and belief."

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SOS



Where next for Central Coast?

After losing the first leg of the minor semi-final 2-0 to Queensland Roar, Lawrie McKinna's **Central Coast Mariners** face an uphill battle to progress – but the minor semi-final isn't over yet

HOME advantage didn't seem to count for Central Coast Mariners last Friday in the first leg of the minor semi-final against Queensland Roar. A blistering start and early dominance was undone by the well-travelling Roar leaving Coast with a huge task in the second leg at Suncorp Stadium.

It's a tough task, but not impossible. Football, as the cliché goes, is a game of two halves; although Mariners aren't in a favourable position after a disappointing home leg, destiny remains in their hands.

FIRST LEG

A great start to the game from Mariners saw them create a chance within the first minute and the opening exchanges were in their favour. When Roar broke the deadlock through a Mitch Nichols header from a corner it was against the run of play.

Pedj Bojic will no doubt put his hand up for allowing Nichols to evade his marking far too easily, but these defensive lapses have blighted the final few games of the regular season for Central Coast. From there it appeared the belief sapped away from Mariners and Queensland continued to grow. Then the second goal came again from a defensive error – a clumsy tackle from Paul O'Grady gave Van Dijk the opportunity to score from the penalty spot, which he duly converted.

The second half was poor, but the first half we did enough to be up. We had the most possession but it's the same story for the past three weeks; we've done well and the chances we were scoring at the start of the season are now not going in. Lawrie McKinna says. "We're switching off and teams are taking advantage of us."

McKinna may have thrown caution to the wind by bringing on extra strikers, but the breakthrough never materialised. Striker Sasho Petrovski is frank in his assessment aware of the task ahead.

"We've got our backs against the wall now," he says. "It's going to have to be a huge effort to turn it around and progress in the finals. It's not out of the question but it's a tough ask with the way we've been playing."

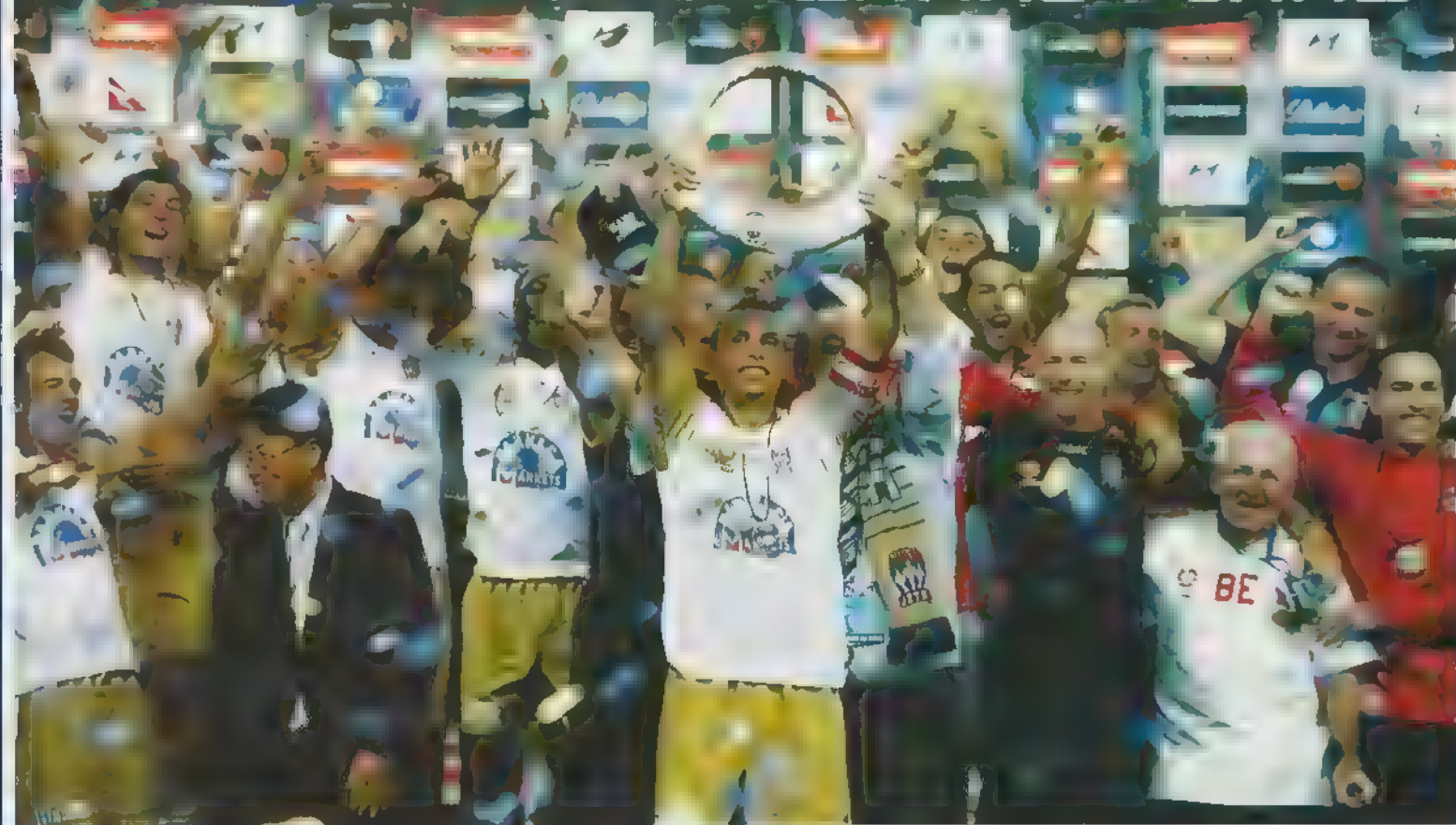
TAKING AIM

For so much of this season Mariners have been tree scoring, due in large part to McKinna's decision to adopt a three-striker approach to many games. Concerned by the goals being shipped at the other end, McKinna has recently opted for a 4-4-2.

"I thought we were very comfortable at the start last week, creating chances, so the 4-4-2 was working," McKinna says.

While the coach believes his less adventurous team doesn't need to go for broke from the off, Petrovski suggests the formation change isn't working. ▶

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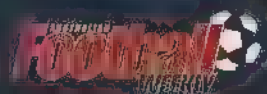
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It's interesting Lawrie's kept it the same up front for the last three or four weeks when the boys up front haven't been scoring," he says. "We have to be critical of them, because if you're not scoring and you've got other guys that are biting at the chance then you have to do something to rectify it. But he's got faith in them and wants to give them one more chance, but it's been going on for the last three weeks and our results are suffering."

McKenna, though, feels last week's first half was promising. "We're going to look at starting with three strikers, but we feel that the 4-4-2 with a diamond midfield worked in the first half, but we'll look at some things in the week," McKenna says.

STAYING FOCUSED

For all the Mariners' early dominance, it was a loss of concentration at the back that gave Roar the lead against the run of play. The replays of the goal don't make for good viewing: it was Bojkic who didn't pay close enough attention to the player he was marking, Nichols, who stole a yard in front of him to head home the first goal of the game.

"Bojkic has switched off and they've scored and that was disappointing. Even at half-time we were reasonably happy that we could go out there in the second half and do something and then when the penalty went in we lost our way a bit and when they went down to 10 men we didn't do well at all," says McKenna. "It's very frustrating."

These lapses have blighted the team's form and with Roar's revival at home, remaining focused and switched on this Friday night is paramount. A clean sheet is a must, if they are to have any chance of overturning the deficit.

"We'll be disciplined and not go out there all guns blazing because we can't afford to cop a goal, either. We have 90 minutes to get the goals," McKenna says.

KEEPING FAITH

The Mariners have a wealth of finals experience, having lost the grand final two out of the three previous seasons – so they know what's needed, plus have the desire to get a step further.

However, the loss of form towards the end of the season has come at the wrong time. The dip in form for McKenna's men has come at the worst possible time and the body language of many players in the first leg told the story: confidence appears low at a time when the team need to rely on it the most.

"We have to get back to the simple things we're good at doing, like working hard and moving the ball quickly and supporting our strikers, and get back to using width, that's the plan," McKenna says. "The confidence is there but we need to get a goal somewhere along the line and we'll take chances later in the game if we have to."

"It's definitely not over, if you look at history you see teams come back from these kind of deficits," Petrovski says. "We've just got to do the simple things and focus on the job in hand."

LAST TIME AT SUNCORP

These two last met in Brisbane back in round three when Mariners pulled off an amazing 4-2 victory. Mart Simon scored from an acute angle, followed by a Mile Jedinak blockbuster free-kick and two from Macallister to seal up the points. "We went up there and played them off the park and we'll definitely look at that – we've got nothing to lose and everyone's writing us off but it's still there for us," McKenna believes.



Mariners rued their missed chances last week.



And it's the same mentality for the Mariners players. "We smashed them up there in round three, it's not like we can't do it – maybe we have to look back to that game and see how we did it, what things worked and maybe look back at who was playing and maybe get that formation," Petrovski says. "The simple things will get us back into this game and that's what we need to try."

EARLY GOAL

The right tactics in this situation are hard to gauge. Petrovski argues that the Mariners can get a goal early to boost their confidence and reduce Roar's players.

"We have to go out and try to get our first goal early – if we can get on the scoresheet it'll set us up and then they'll get worried," says Petrovski.

The coach may take a more cautious approach though. Getting the early goal is not so important, McKenna says. "We go all guns blazing we could leave ourselves open, it would be the same strategy as when we played Newcastle last year, the plan was to chip away, even if it's in the second half, if we score a goal, that's when hopeful, vision, patience, some acres, and then anything can happen."

"We have to fight, work hard and go out there in the right frame of mind and grab the target that's been set for us. We have to go out determined," says Petrovski.

EXPERT OPINION PAUL OKON



"The Mariners have lost four of five games since Mile Jedinak left and I think psychologically they're struggling to come to terms with that, rather than actually really missing him that much. He was important, but no one can convince me that one player can determine the success of a team. They haven't overcome his loss."

"They started not too bad, but I was surprised with playing at home they decided to go with two strikers instead of three. This year they've done well when they've played three strikers, but maybe McKenna was a bit afraid of Queensland's mobility in the midfield so wanted an extra player in the middle."

"They have to go with three up front and play higher up the field. They've got width, but they've got to be dangerous. I think they have to score goals very well in the wide areas because that's where Queensland's strength is."

"The Mariners have to go for it, they have to be the first to score, but aware that at any stage Roar can hurt them in those wide areas so players in those positions need to be very disciplined. If you let Queensland have too much possession, with their mobility, eventually they'll have chances to score. It's important to be confident going into the game, not playing further up the field but being aware that once you lose the ball your midfielders have to defend tight and narrow and once the ball goes wide you double-up on their players."

"It's definitely possible that Mariners can do it."

PIECES OF THE PUZZLE



With star signing Robbie Fowler on board, the picture is becoming a lot clearer for new Hyundai A-League franchise North Queensland Fury and its coach **IAN FERGUSON**

Robbie Fowler's signing has caused a lot of excitement at Fury, how much was involved with you signing him? The hardest part was getting him over, my next plan was to try and sell the plan to him and my football structure, like where we were going to train and who my coaching staff are. After that we put him on a boat and showed him Magnetic Island, The Strand, and little cafes where we could have coffees or the water. That was pretty basic and straightforward and it worked, we had nothing to hide. The climate and lifestyle is a little different to England, no wonder he's looking forward to it. Yeah definitely, I phoned home to my family and they're all sitting in the car because he's famous now he's

is Robbie concerned about training and playing in the heat? Going for a beer is one thing, but serious football is hard work in that. Definitely, and that's something me and my coaching staff will be working on board. The fact we don't train the players for the sake of training them in the heat. We have to be careful how we do it. We have a good plan and preparation for about getting the players acclimated to the heat. We're going to start on April 1, with a one-day week and get them used to the heat and used to each other. Was signing Robbie on a two-year deal always the plan or would you have still been happy with him signing for one year initially? He never once questioned the length of

the contract. We're a brand new club and I don't want any good players walking out after a year while we're trying to get the nucleus right for the squad for two or three years and then build on that. He's got a lot to offer us and I would hate to have him here for a year and then someone else approach him from the A-League and he go there. My thoughts were to get your best players on a two-year deal and keep them there, because the following year another two teams come in, so we need to look ahead. Are you concerned by the current player drain and that if Robbie does fire, cashed-up Asian clubs might try to lure him away? I believe there were Asian clubs involved before us, with a lot more money than us

but Robbie wanted to come out and see the place so I knew we were in with a chance. He saw we were genuine and passionate about what we were doing and where we were going with the club and that struck a chord with him - it wasn't about the money. Robbie's a wealthy boy in his own right, so it definitely wasn't about the money I can assure you. It's been a real signal of intent. It's part after all the noise being made by Gold Coast United recently. We're a new club and some people are differently: I like to think we're not going to shout our mouths off - if you do that you might end up falling flat on your face and then you're the biggest idiot out there. That's not me, that's not my chairman, and

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EYES TO THE FUTURE

The close of the **WESTFIELD W-LEAGUE** season not only marked success in the first season and those involved with launching it, but showed a pathway for improved female football.

WORDS Stephanie Branda

WHEN the record crowd filed out of Ballymore Stadium after the inaugural grand final of the Westfield W-League, it brought to an end a busy time for those involved in the planning and execution of season one. For a league born, set-up and initiated within eight weeks, there was a well-deserved sense of achievement.

For all those involved, from day one there has been an understanding that the Westfield W-League simply *had* to happen. It was no longer possible to ignore the growth rate of women's football in the country and the success of the senior women's national team alongside the lack of availability of competitive football for elite female participants of the game. As the recently retired Matildas skipper Cheryl Salisbury puts it: "Top-flight sports in all countries have a national competition".

But in season 2008/09, the W-League was finally launched. It was a healthy dose of goodwill at every level that set it on its way.

For at least the first four years of the competition, FFA will contribute funding, money that is needed for the overall set-up and running of the league itself. Some of this went towards travel expenses this season, including flights for 15 players and three team officials, but it was mainly the state federations—accustomed to working on football at grassroots level—who took on the extra workload and financial burden involved in the "behind the scenes" graft, match-day preparations and accommodating players for away matches.

And the players... Well, they played for free.

MONEY TALKS

Funding is a constant issue in the world of sport and competitive leagues don't run for free. While the reality of players receiving match payments is still a way off, some of the issues were at least visible.

To offer to cover out-of-pocket expenses for players and subsidise team members who had to miss work in order to travel for games.

Capital Football, the driving force behind Canberra United, showed enormous initiative in this regard and through acquisition of sponsors and support at a grassroots level.

Huge community support greeted the inclusion of Canberra United to the W-League and it was a decision that proved very successful on and off the field.

But it wasn't completely smooth for the other seven teams that made up the rest of the competition. While these were aligned with Hyundai A-League clubs (Adelaide United were the only club to have full-time players), they found that the limited lead-in time meant their state federations had to take on a huge workload for match-day logistics. It was even tougher for Football NSW, who found themselves as caretaker for both Central Coast Mariners and Sydney FC.

While everyone can see the bigger picture and exude enthusiasm about the importance of the league for women's football and for women's sport as a whole, this cannot pay the bills and some federations are counting losses of up to \$150,000 due to participation in the W-League. It's an area that needs addressing. And though losses are understood, even expected, in an inaugural season, those figures are not sustainable in the long-term, particularly when the benefit to the organisations may appear to be minimal. Alignment with the A-League clubs makes perfect sense from a marketing perspective, some feel the club also receives the kudos for the hard work.

FFA are aware of these issues and review meetings have been, and continue to be held with CEOs and operational staff in an honest bid to

SMOOTHER PATH

In all likelihood, season two will be a lot easier.

With the benefit of experience, teams will have more of the competition and have ample time to plan and secure larger sponsorships to ease the financial burden. Recruitment is expected to be more aggressive for next season and jostling for player signings will no doubt start early, plus there is a proposed expansion of the league to include two complete home and away rounds for each side.

A positive to be taken from the inaugural season was that crowd attendance exceeded expectation and though newspaper coverage in NSW and Victoria was found wanting, if the league can continue to build on its strong beginnings it's also likely to attract the interest of overseas players struggling for competitive women's football in their own country.

However, the big success story from the W-League thus far is talent development. Matildas coach Tom Sermanni has been the winner in this respect, with all his current and future stars now involved in competitive elite football regularly.

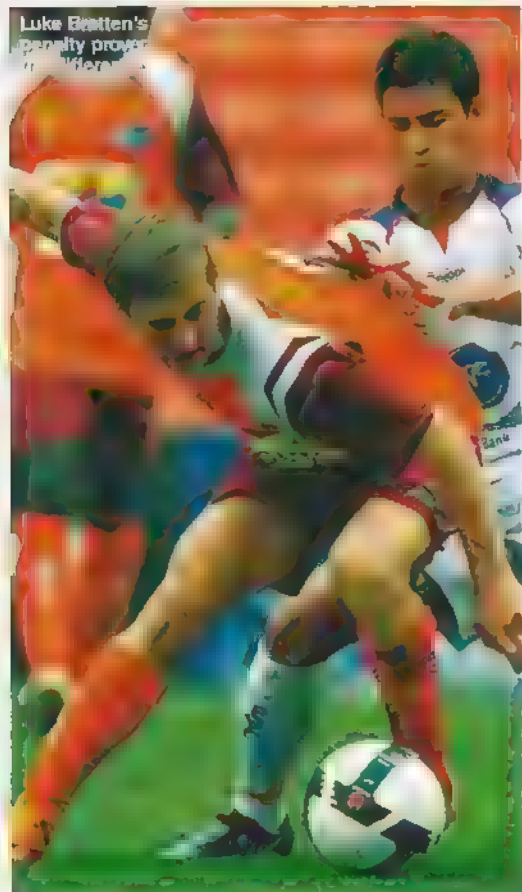
One constant for the Westfield W-League Mark II is the broadcast deal with the ABC, which formed an important piece of the W-League puzzle. While the ABC agree there are areas they would like to improve, they were justifiably "delighted with the product on the field and looking forward to their continuing involvement with women's football".

Impressive viewing figures showed what an appetite there is for the women's game and with the broadcast deal set to continue for another two years, viewers can be satisfied they will be able to see these talented female players in action in a national competition for some time to come.





Roar Still In The Hunt



QUEENSLAND ROAR ENSURED the battle for a place in the inaugural National Youth League grand final will go down to the wire with a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Perth Glory. Luke Bratten's 38th-minute penalty proved the difference, and set up Rado Vidosic's young charges for a winner-takes-all clash with second-placed Adelaide in the final round of the regular season. Only a victory will see Roar progress.

Ludovic Boi, Reece Vitiglia and Hayden Doyle all went close for Glory before the visitors made their breakthrough via the penalty spot. Steven Hesketh hauled Timothy Smits down as he turned just inside the box and Bratten calmly beat Glory goalkeeper Dejan Aleksic low to his right.

Glory chased the equaliser in the second half and it nearly arrived in the final minute of normal time. Dean Evans' powerful 20-metre drive was tipped over the bar by Matthew Acton and Evans was again denied moments later as Daniel Bowles cleared his goal-bound effort off the line.



Sydney Are Premiers



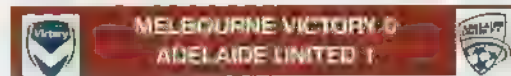
SYDNEY FC YOUTH have won the inaugural Youth League premiership in style, defeating Newcastle Jets 7-1 to claim their spot in the grand final.

After a number of their players had progressed to the Hyundai A-League first team, Sydney's once dominant side had dropped points of late, but the return of Chris Payne, Kofi Danning and Rhyan Grant meant coach Steve O'Connor's team were back to their best for the trip to Adamstown Oval.

James Virgili opened the scoring for the hosts after just five minutes, but the visitors took control soon after. Chris Payne equalised 10 minutes later, and goals from Danning, Grant, Sam Munro and an own goal from Jets captain Taylor Regan put Sydney up 5-1 by half-time.

The battering continued after the break with Brendan Gan and Zach Cairncross scoring as Sydney put on a show.

Newcastle, like their senior counterparts, finish as wooden-spooners, with just three wins in 17 games.



Reds Eye Roar Decider



ADELAIDE UNITED GO into the final round of the Youth League needing a draw or win against Queensland Roar in Brisbane to secure a spot in the grand final, after a 1-0 win over Melbourne Victory at Bob Jane Stadium.

In a tight game, it was the Reds' latest signing who got the breakthrough. Rostyn Griffiths, brought in as a replacement for Jason Spagnuolo, was first to react on a loose ball in the six yard box in the 11th minute.

Griffiths' goal proved to be the decider, as the much-improved Melbourne poured forward in search of an equaliser, with Mathew Theodore having a shot clear off the line, and Aziz Behich and Dimitri Hatzimouratis unable to snatch a goal. But with senior players Ang Costanzo and Jonas Salley in defence, Adelaide held on for the 10th win of the season.

Adelaide take on Queensland at Suncorp Stadium on Friday night for the right to face Sydney FC in the grand final.

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
Sydney FC	17	12	2	3	42	22	20	38
Adelaide United	17	10	4	3	33	11	22	34
Queensland Roar	17	10	2	5	31	19	12	32
Perth Glory	17	6	2	9	24	31	-7	20
Central Coast Mariners	17	6	2	9	20	35	-15	20
Melbourne Victory	17	6	1	10	21	25	-4	19
Newcastle Jets	17	3	1	13	17	44	-27	10

NATIONAL YOUTH LEAGUE

SEASON DRAW 2008/09



Round 13

Newcastle Jets v Melbourne Victory
Sydney FC v Perth Glory
Central Coast Mariners v BYE

Round 14

Newcastle Jets v Central Coast Mariners
Perth Glory v Adelaide United Members
Melbourne Victory v Sydney FC
Queensland Roar v BYE

Round 15

Central Coast Mariners v Perth Glory
Melbourne Victory v Queensland Roar
Adelaide United v Sydney FC
Newcastle Jets v BYE

Round 16

Adelaide United v Newcastle Jets
Central Coast Mariners v Queensland Roar
Perth Glory v Melbourne Victory
Adelaide United v Queensland Roar (rescheduled)
Sydney FC v BYE

19-20 December

4-2
1-4

26-28 December

2-4
2-0
3-1

3 January

2-2
3-0
3-3

9-14 January

5-0
0-3
0-2
1-1

Round 17

Queensland Roar v Sydney FC
Melbourne Victory v Central Coast Mariners
Newcastle Jets v Perth Glory
Melbourne Victory v Adelaide United (rescheduled)

17-21 January

1-1
1-2
2-5

Round 18

Queensland Roar v Perth Glory
Sydney FC v Newcastle Jets
Central Coast Mariners v Adelaide United
Melbourne Victory v BYE

24-25 January

3-2
2-0
0-2

Round 19

Newcastle Jets v Central Coast Mariners
Sydney FC v Melbourne Victory
Adelaide United v Perth Glory
Queensland Roar v BYE

30 January- 1 February

1-2
2-3
3-0

Round 20

Melbourne Victory v Adelaide United
Newcastle Jets v Sydney FC
Perth Glory v Queensland Roar
Central Coast Mariners v BYE

7 February

0-1
1-7
0-1

Round 21

14 February

Central Coast Mariners v Syd

Grand Final

Team 1 v Team 2 TBC

TBC

MAKE EVERY GOAL COUNT

SEMI FINAL - RESULT (NORMAL TIME)

QUEENSLAND	\$1.80	DRAW	\$3.70	CENTRAL COAST	\$3.80
MELBOURNE	\$1.75	DRAW	\$3.70	ADELAIDE	\$4.00

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HYUNDAI
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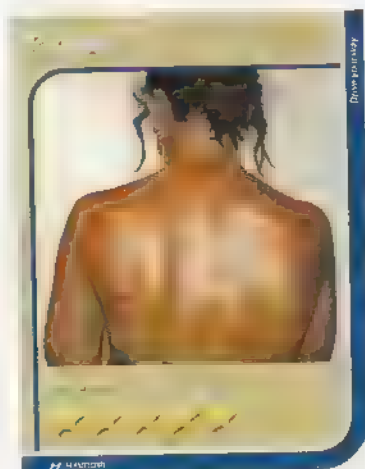
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Promotion: They love football!

HAVE YOU VOTED yet? The Hyundai ilovefootball campaign ran through September to January, and certainly showed that the Hyundai A-League has its fair share of football crazies! There were more than 400 entries submitted to the competition and it's now down to the final five, who are all in with a chance to win the Hyundai i30 at this year's A-League Grand Final.

Last week we saw two of the finalists and this week is your chance to check out the final three. Public voting runs until February 22 and it's up to you to choose who takes home the big prize. Plus, one lucky voter has the chance to



win a family prize pack valued at \$6000 from Foxtel, Sony and Westfield.

Head to www.ilovefootball.com.au to cast your vote and for competition terms and conditions, and also check out September and November's winners.

MONTHLY WINNERS

October

FAN TAN – Annie Morongicello

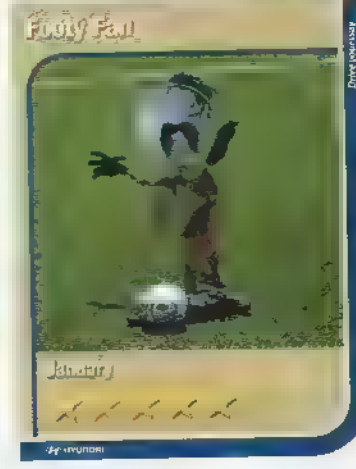


"I love football because, it's the only sport that makes the world go crazy! I've been infected and diagnosed with football fever. I LOVE IT!"

December

HAVING A BALL – Mitchell Jones

"I love football because it unites people from all over the world. Despite cultural barriers football continues to



inspire all. Week in, week out it controls my life."

January

FOOTY FAN – Darren Camilleri

Seeing a fan in a supermarket, a small amount of cash and some creativity brought Footy Fan to life. He now sits in Darren's living room and watches all the games with him and his friends.

Winners:

Disco the Whistle



THIS WEEKEND THE will see the second winner of the inaugural Zurich Referee Education Experience head to Melbourne's Telstra Dome to take up their chance to see all the happenings match officials during a professional semi-final.

Nathan Haydon (right) earned his place in the programme following his impressive officiating performance at the 2008 National Youth Championship for Boys. The Zurich Referee Education Experience was launched this season by Football Federation Australia and aims to continue the development and growth of match officials working in Australian football.

Last week, Nathan Haydon was the major semi-finalist. For both young officials allowed them

to witness first-hand, the preparation, management and reporting that is needed prior to and during the semi-finals.

Zurich joined forces with the FFA Referee Education Program as an official partner and are also the official partner of the Hyundai A-League.



Winners:

Part of the team



THROUGHOUT THE FINAL

rounds of the Hyundai A League 2008/09 season, six lucky fans were given the chance to really be part of their favourite team meeting the players and having a team photo with them, all courtesy of Qantas.

On top of that, there were four march tickets, making it a dream prize package.

In round 21, two more winners met their teams. Paul Steel and his kids were there with Melbourne Victory before they took on Wellington at Telstra Dome, for the final round finishing with a 2-0 win and moving one step closer to securing the minor premiership. Peter Summerson was also there with his children when Central Coast took on Adelaide United, unfortunately going down 1-0, but still progressing into the semi-finals.



Behind your team:

Send your support!



Was it your team that didn't come away with the result last week? Maybe they need to hear your words of support to reverse the result...

Optus, official telecommunications partner to the Hyundai A-League, has a team text message service, so you can

send your support straight to your team during the 2009 Finals Series. Send your message, starting with your team name, to 199 FOOTY (199 36689), and let them know you're behind them.

SMS charged at 55 cents and available on compatible handsets and networks only.



RISING STAR...

WANT TO
BE AN AFW
RISING STAR?
JUST EMAIL:
FOOTBALLWEEKLY
@NEWSMAGAZINES
.COM.AU

NAME: MATTEO DE VECCHI

AGE: 10

Club: Queens Park

Where's the club based? Queens Park, Sydney.

Won any trophies yet? Yes.

Position: Striker.

How many goals have you scored? I have never counted, but quite a lot.

Ever scored a hat-trick? Yes, once I scored five goals in a game where the final score was 5-0 our way.

Ever received a red card? No.

What's your favourite thing about football?

Creating goals.

What skill are you best at on the pitch? Also, creating goals.

Who are your favourite players? Alessandro Del Piero, Tim Cahill, Ronaldinho.

Who would you most like to emulate? Alessandro Del Piero.

Who's your favourite team? Juventus.

What sports do you like aside from football? AFL, rugby league, cricket.

Where would you like to be five years from now? Playing for my school team.

What's your favourite dinner for after a game? Pizza.

Who's going to win the Hyundai A-League this year? Adelaide.

Who's better: Tim Cahill or Harry Kewell? Tim Cahill.

When you get a big money contract what's the first thing you want to buy? A car!

My favourite football saying is: What a goal!

My least favourite players are: Kaka.

Thierry Henry

My favourite saying on the pitch is: What a goal!



5 THINGS FOOTBALL CONDITIONING

FEW SPORTS ARE played on a field as big as a football pitch, so making sure your fitness is at the game is essential. Here's a few points to keep in mind ahead of the 2009 season.

- 1. Endurance is important** for footballers because the longer you can work near your peak performance, the better you will be during a match. This means being ready to do lots of running throughout the game.
- 2. Explosive power** is important in football. One way to improve this is through step jumps which will build your leg muscles and increase the immediate power in them.
- 3. Muscle strength** can be achieved through doing longer runs in your training and will help during the game as your legs will be used on the longer exercise.
- 4. Practice tight space dribbling** to develop your foot to eye coordination and improve your touch and fitness at the same time.
- 5. Shuttle runs** (running back and forth over a short space) are an excellent exercise for footballers as they improve your fitness, agility and speed from a standing start.

Use your brain!

Perfect XI

VUKOVIC

ROJIC

COUNTRYMAN

JOHNSON

MURPHY

CELESTI

DEL PIERO

MILLER

ROBINSON

SIMON

AGOSTINO

C	B	M	O	O	R	T	H	W	A	I
O	O	G	N	E	N	O	V	S	K	I
R	J	V	U	K	O	V	I	C	G	O
N	I	S	I	M	O	T	B	E	L	A
T	C	E	L	E	A	M	I	L	O	G
H	E	D	I	C	H	E	R	E	N	O
W	O	I	S	K	I	D	U	S	N	S
A	W	U	S	I	M	O	N	K	V	T
I	M	M	I	L	L	E	R	I	X	I
T	H	U	T	C	H	I	N	S	O	N
E	Y	B	A	R	B	I	E	R	O	O

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General Insurance
Investments

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Zurich is proud to support football as an Official Partner of the Hyundai A-League



Because change happenzTM

The Hyundai A-League has been an unpredictable tipping minefield throughout the regular 2008/09 season, but it's also provided a host of quality and entertaining games. Which is your pick?

WHO'S GOING TO CROWN THE BEST OF THE BEST? The games on the list aren't just in the top 100, but also in the top 100 of every decade that's come and the answer isn't always varied. Why? Because this season has arguably been the closest in the history of the Hyundai A-League with wins spread across all the teams – and the results have been spectacular. Entertainment, excitement, quality goals and great moments have made many of this season's games memorable. Here we've selected 10 of our favourites, in no particular order, for you to relive and enjoy. Have an opinion on which team won one of the games? Visit www.foxsports.com.au/football/aleague



Buty twice came from behind (the second equaliser from Dadi was among the best goals of the season) and when Rakovsky put the home side ahead in the 51st minute, the comeback was on. With five minutes of injury time played it looked like being a memorable home win for the west coasters until Jade Norah popped up to stab in the latest of equalisers.
http://www.foxsports.com.au/football/video/0,,A-League_9030.00.html



These slides always provide plenty of goals, action and entertainment. Two goals from Corica in the first 14 minutes had Sydney on their way to three points, but replies from former Sydney man Petrovski brought the scores level at 2-2. With Musialik sent off on debut, Mariners looked like being in the driving seat for the win, but then a little-known Shannon Coll comes in with a free-kick of pure quality to give Sydney the points in another Bluetongue classic.

http://www.foxsports.com.au/football/video/0,,A-League_9050.00.htm



A display of real intent by Victory tore the reigning premiers to shreds from start to finish. Total domination and incisive attacking from Melbourne meant Newcastle were never in it. Jets got off lightly with only copping five that night.

http://www.foxsports.com.au/football/video/0,,A-League_9133,00.html



This match was the start of Marinos' reputation as never-say-die under the Kings. Adelaide, enjoying a late start both home and abroad, were missing. 45 minutes after the game all but nothing. Not quite... Two goals from Mile Jedinak (see a penalty) set up a ground-and-finish and then Simon Elliott in the capitalised 54 minutes the comeback was complete. High drama.

http://www.foxsports.com.au/football/video/0_A-League
9544.00.html



TOGETHER WE'LL LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD.

No matter how little a child has, if they have their health, they have a shot at a future. Which is why UNICEF Australia and Football Federation Australia are teaming up to create crucial sports-based community programs for underprivileged children whose lives are at risk from poverty, disease and violence in places such as Papua New Guinea, Iraq and even parts of Australia. And now we're asking you to join the team. Please donate whatever you can at www.unicef.org.au

unicef 

 FOOTBALL
FEDERATION
AUSTRALIA



Adelaide United v Melbourne Victory, Rd 10

Played before the first leg of the Asian Champions League final against Gamba Osaka in Japan, Adelaide were 2-1 up from Cassio's sweet free-kick, but Melbourne never knew when they're beaten. A second penalty from captain Kevin Muscat brought the scores level, before Billy Celeski's winner gave Victory three vital points.

http://www.foxsports.com.au/football/video/0,,A-League_9837,00.html



Sydney FC v Central Coast Mariners, Rd 10

Mariners are 3-0 down after 57 minutes and the game's over. Well, haven't we heard this before? This time, Sydney are on the receiving end of Lawrie McKinnis's comeback kings. Two goals from Mark Simon and another from Nik Medja see the game end a hugely entertaining 3-3. Sydney never quite recovered.

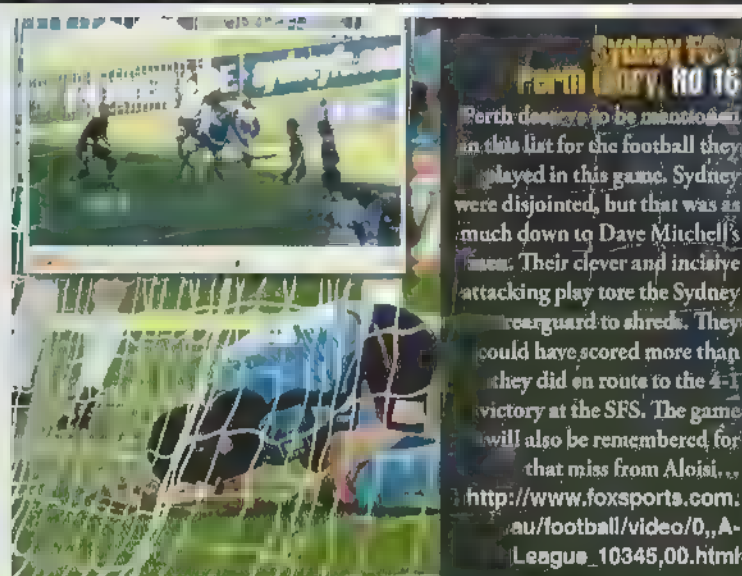
http://www.foxsports.com.au/football/video/0,,A-League_9844,00.html



Wellington Phoenix v Melbourne Victory, Rd 13

Phoenix, making a run towards the top four, proved their undeniable improvement this season by putting in an impressive performance against one of the competition favourites. The football played by both was excellent and the game from Shane Smeltz was of the highest quality and worthy of winning any football match.

http://www.foxsports.com.au/football/video/0,,A-League_10111,00.html



Sydney FC v Perth Glory, Rd 16

Perth deserve to be mentioned in this list for the football they played in this game. Sydney were disjointed, but that was as much down to Dave Mitchell's team. Their clever and incisive attacking play tore the Sydney rearguard to shreds. They could have scored more than they did en route to the 4-1 victory at the SFS. The game will also be remembered for that miss from Aloisi...

http://www.foxsports.com.au/football/video/0,,A-League_10345,00.html



Melbourne Victory v Sydney FC, Rd 17

This had a fall. Sydney take a 2-0 lead after four minutes through beasts from young stars Cobi and Gani, and their final push is back on track. A reply from Thompson sparks Victory into life who go on to control the game. A screamer from Nick Ward and a near finish from Fabiano give Victory the points.

http://www.foxsports.com.au/football/video/0,,A-League_10409,00.html



Central Coast Mariners v Queensland Roar, Rd 19

Goals, goals, more goals. Seven, to be precise. Medja struck after five minutes, then Van Dijk, beginning to see the league on fire, scored other side of half-time to give Roar the lead, before Simon brings the scores level. Mindacon caps off a frighteningly good display with a goal to put Roar back in front and when a Porter own goal gives Roar a two-goal cushion, the game looks decided. A Moore slip lets Simon in for another, but Roar run out 4-3 winners.

http://www.foxsports.com.au/football/video/0,,A-League_10558,00.html

WORLD NEWS

Star striker Gonzalo Higuain refutes suggestions that Real Madrid are becoming boring under Juande Ramos



HIGUAIN: REAL ARE NOT BORING

REAL MADRID STRIKER Gonzalo Higuain has played down suggestions the champions have become "boring" to watch under new coach Juande Ramos.

Ramos has enjoyed a phenomenal start to life since replacing Bernd Schuster in the Madrid hotseat, with their recent 1-0 win over Racing Santander taking his record to eight victories in nine competitive matches, including the last seven in a row.

However, four of those wins have been 1-0 at home and this has led to questions about the entertainment

factor in comparison to free-scoring Primera Liga pacesetters Barcelona.

Higuain, who has scored 13 in the league this season, feels it is results that matter.

He said: "The key thing is that we haven't conceded any goals and the team continue winning. I don't think that we are boring."

"To win seven successive games isn't easy. What is important now is that we rest and think about the next game. We need to continue along this line and continue working."

FRONTMAN KEZMAN IN THE DOCK

MATEJA KEZMAN HAS been summoned to appear before the Paris St Germain board to explain his angry shirt-throwing gesture during last Wednesday's 3-0 defeat by Bordeaux in the Coupe de la Ligue semi-final at the Parc des Princes.

The Serbia striker was substituted in the 59th minute of the match, only moments after squandering a gilt-edged chance to score what would have been an equaliser to make it 1-1.

The miss provoked whistles of derision from the home fans and, as he was being substituted, Kezman tossed his jersey on the ground before jogging past the PSG bench and straight down the tunnel.

The striker issued an immediate apology in front of the press after the match, but that is not expected to spare him. A PSG statement read: "Following the meeting between PSG and Bordeaux, Mateja Kezman will meet the coach (Paul Le Guen) as well as the club's board to explain his gesture."

"The club will then reveal the subsequent sanctions."

Kezman, pictured, has been unable to secure a regular place in PSG's starting line-up since joining the club last summer, and has often been the subject of jeers from supporters.

He admitted that partly explained his wild

reaction, saying: "I made a mistake. Maybe something like that has never happened here, but I am a person with a strong character living one of the most difficult moments of my football life since arriving here."

"Everyone needs to know that this has nothing to do with the club, the fans or the shirt; this was a reaction of anger at myself. I will do my best in the future to improve myself for the club."

MANNINI BACKED BY CONI

NAPOLI MIDFIELDER DANIELE Mannini has received support from the Italian National Olympic Committee as he looks to challenge a one-year ban for turning up late for an anti-doping test.

Mannini's former Brescia team-mate Davide Possanzini was also hit with a 12-month ban by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) last week after both were found guilty "of non-co-operation with anti-doping officials" following the club's Serie B match against Chievo on December 1, 2007.

CONI president Gianni Petrucci wrote to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) asking them to review the situation.

"We'll see what can be done," said Petrucci. "We'll ask that the case be looked at more in depth."

DEN HAAG'S WETZEL WANTS HELP

ANDRE WETZEL HAS called for ADO Den Haag to appoint a technical manager to ease the burden on his shoulders.

Wetzel is coach and technical director at the club and admits he would like fresh support, to help with off-field issues.

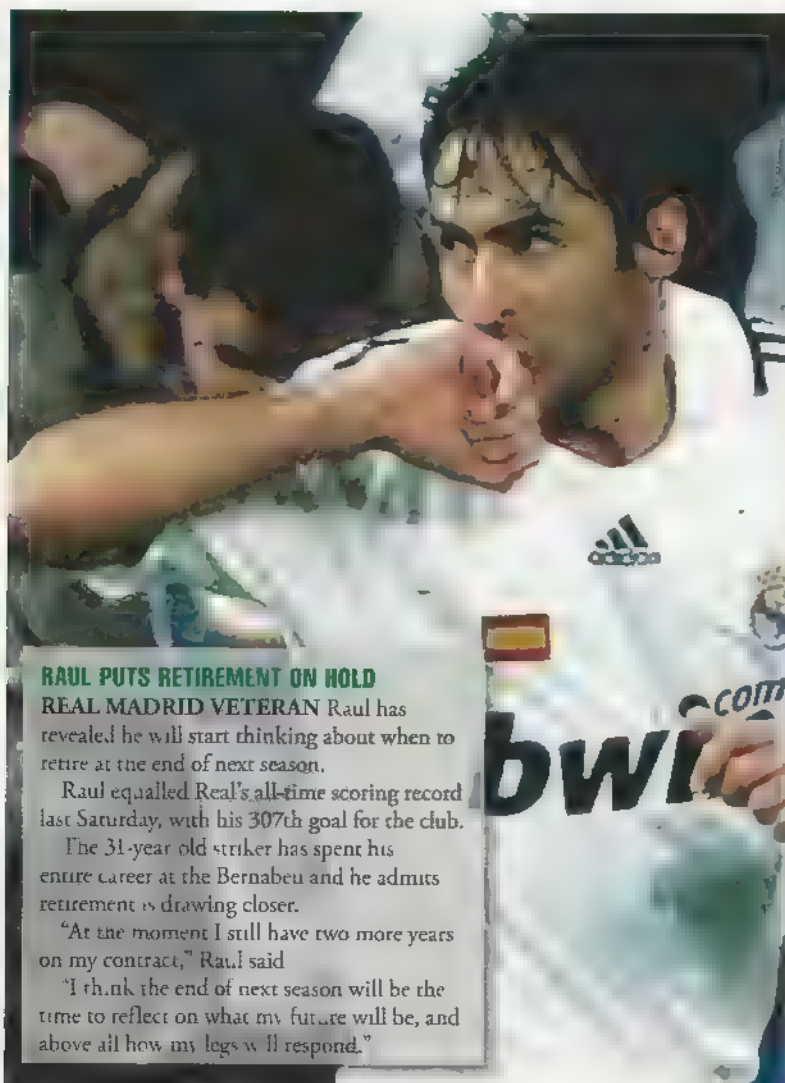
He said: "I sit down with players around the table who I might have to put in the line-up the next day. It's a good idea to appoint a technical manager."

"Not immediately, but we have to do that in the new season."

HERRERA REMAINS UPBEAT

FORMER ESPANYOL sporting director Paco Herrera





RAUL PUTS RETIREMENT ON HOLD

REAL MADRID VETERAN Raul has revealed he will start thinking about when to retire at the end of next season.

Raul equalled Real's all-time scoring record last Saturday, with his 307th goal for the club.

The 31-year old striker has spent his entire career at the Bernabeu and he admits retirement is drawing closer.

"At the moment I still have two more years on my contract," Raul said.

"I think the end of next season will be the time to reflect on what my future will be, and above all how my legs will respond."

insists he only has good memories after leaving the club by mutual agreement late last Wednesday.

The board and Herrera came to an agreement to end his contract at the club in a meeting. The 55-year-old, who left his position as Liverpool scout in 2006 to move to Espanyol, expressed his gratitude to the club.

"The best thing is for me to say goodbye through this statement because what I want most is for Espanyol to achieve its aims, which I feel I have helped as much as possible," said Herrera.

"I have always felt respected and well treated. My time as sporting director at Espanyol has reached its conclusion.

"There were all types of experiences, but I leave with vivid good memories."

TORRES HOPING TO FACE GERRARD

REAL MADRID DEFENDER

Miguel Torres is hoping injury does not force Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard to

miss the Champions League encounter between the two clubs.

Gerrard suffered a hamstring strain during Wednesday night's FA Cup defeat to Everton and the England midfielder is set to be sidelined for around three weeks.

That has put a question mark against the 28-year-old's availability to face Madrid in the first leg of their Champions League last 16 tie, which is scheduled to take place at the Bernabeu on February 25.

"I don't know how badly he's injured, but it's clear that if he doesn't play it would be an important absence for them," said Torres.

"But I think that in a Champions League game, what everyone wants is to see an entertaining match, and if Gerrard cannot play it would be bad.

"If he doesn't play, he will be a big loss for the fans. Personally I really like this player and I would like to come up against him on the pitch."

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CAN ANYONE STOP UNITED?

Alex Ferguson's men stand on the brink of immortality: can **MANCHESTER UNITED** achieve the seemingly impossible and claim six trophies this season?

WORDS Thomas Woodgate

LAS if your Premier League and UEFA Champions League

warm up to this season for Manchester United. Last season's success was remarkable; they were pushed all the way by Chelsea for both, and the form of Cristiano Ronaldo paved the way for much of their achievement.

This year, however, they're an even more dangerous proposition. The purchase of striker Dimitar Berbatov is one reason, as is the continuing emergence of young players such as Nani and Anderson. Throw in Rooney, Tevez, Ronaldo, and the experience of players like Van Der Sar, Giggs, Scholes, Vidic, Ferdinand, the list just goes on.

Manchester United's form is beyond red hot right now and they're brushing teams aside week after week. They've already scored two pieces of silverware (Community Shield and World Club Cup), but can they scoop another four to make six in total? We examine what awaits them on the remaining fronts...

CARLING CUP

Having qualified for the final to be played on March 1 against current holders Tottenham Hotspur, Manchester United are one game from winning the Carling Cup. Tottenham have improved under the guidance of Harry Redknapp, but they remain an inconsistent work-in-progress. They'll be fired up for this

their only route into

but United beat them in the FA Cup recently and given the form Ferguson's men are currently in, it's hard to see Spurs stopping them.

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Manchester United face, arguably the greatest test in retaining their Champions League crown in their upcoming two-legged clash against old

Ferguson is determined to retain his European title and cement his side's place in the upper echelons of great teams.

nemesis Jose Mourinho's Inter Milan. If anyone can derail the Red Devils' freight train, it's the 'Special One'. Who can forget his joyous running down the Old Trafford touchline when boss of Porto, and the heated exchanges while manager of Chelsea?

Inter currently sit top of Serie A with just two defeats in 22 games; and their striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic is one

of the world's best.

Over two legs, United will be wary of both Inter's stars and their moormouth manager.

Aside from Inter, Barcelona might worry Ferguson's men. They, too, currently sit top of their domestic league, with a solitary defeat in 21 games. They're positioning themselves up for an assault on Europe this year. Plus they have Lionel Messi and a red-hot Thierry Henry up front.

Chelsea play Juventus; both are threats, but one will be eliminated and Chelsea are a pale imitation of Mourinho's 2004-06 champions. Also a chance Liverpool can tactically get it right in Europe and are always a threat in the knock-out stages.

Others remaining include Real Madrid (not the force they once were), Sporting Lisbon (perennially knocked out in the quarters), Bayern Munich (currently sitting fourth in their domestic league) and French powerhouse Lyon. But none of these lesser sides

KEY UTD FIXTURES

2008 FA Cup v Derby County: West Ham need progression for them in the FA Cup.
2008/09 Champions League v Inter Milan: Mourinho and his Italian pacesetters tackle United in the Champions League knock-out stages.
2009 Carling Cup Final v Tottenham Hotspur: Need to decide the destination of the Carling Cup.
2009 Premier League v Newcastle United: Played three days after Carling Cup final and a week before second leg against Inter Milan.
2009 Premier League v Liverpool: Three days after second Inter match they face their closest Premiership rivals.
2009 Premier League v Aston Villa: Surprise package in the league this year, Villa might still be all outside chance.
2009 Premier League v Arsenal: Penultimate game of the season; a win here against Gunners might be enough to wrap up the title.

IT CAN'T HAPPEN

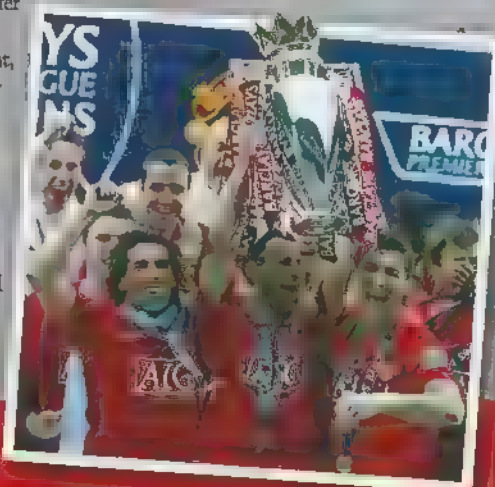
WORDS David Halperin

AS EDITOR OF *AFW* I try to maintain an objective distance – but the truth is, it's impossible to not take football personally. The thought of Manchester United completing an unprecedented sweep sends a shudder down my spine, but can they actually do it?

The domestic cups could be troublesome, as knockout competitions can bring the best out of battlers like Everton and even Spurs; if anyone can inspire a surprise, surely it's Harry Redknapp. Villa will also want to top off a bright season, and Martin O'Neill's athletic young team should soar in the FA Cup. With the EPL, one wonders if their grinding 1-0 victories are lucky or the stuff of champions? Whichever, the return to fitness of Fernando Torres for Liverpool and the form of Aston Villa mean nothing is decided. Both teams go to Old Trafford soon and it's there the title will be decided.

But it's Europe that should offer the sternest test. Both Inter and Barca look deadly at the moment, with the Spanish giants arguably the best team in the world, and enough attacking talent to tear into Vidic and Ferdinand.

In my heart, I'd like to see them come away with nothing. In my head, United will probably win the league and Carling Cup but six trophies are too much, even for this team.

[illegible]

FA CUP

[illegible]

1946-1947 1948-1949 1950-1951 1952-1953 1954-1955 1956-1957 1958-1959 1960-1961 1962-1963 1964-1965 1966-1967 1968-1969 1970-1971 1972-1973 1974-1975 1976-1977 1978-1979 1980-1981 1982-1983 1984-1985 1986-1987 1988-1989 1990-1991 1992-1993 1994-1995 1996-1997 1998-1999 2000-2001 2002-2003 2004-2005 2006-2007 2008-2009 2010-2011 2012-2013 2014-2015 2016-2017 2018-2019 2020-2021 2022-2023 2024-2025 2026-2027 2028-2029 2030-2031 2032-2033 2034-2035 2036-2037 2038-2039 2040-2041 2042-2043 2044-2045 2046-2047 2048-2049 2050-2051 2052-2053 2054-2055 2056-2057 2058-2059 2060-2061 2062-2063 2064-2065 2066-2067 2068-2069 2070-2071 2072-2073 2074-2075 2076-2077 2078-2079 2080-2081 2082-2083 2084-2085 2086-2087 2088-2089 2090-2091 2092-2093 2094-2095 2096-2097 2098-2099 2100-2101 2102-2103 2104-2105 2106-2107 2108-2109 2110-2111 2112-2113 2114-2115 2116-2117 2118-2119 2120-2121 2122-2123 2124-2125 2126-2127 2128-2129 2130-2131 2132-2133 2134-2135 2136-2137 2138-2139 2140-2141 2142-2143 2144-2145 2146-2147 2148-2149 2150-2151 2152-2153 2154-2155 2156-2157 2158-2159 2160-2161 2162-2163 2164-2165 2166-2167 2168-2169 2170-2171 2172-2173 2174-2175 2176-2177 2178-2179 2180-2181 2182-2183 2184-2185 2186-2187 2188-2189 2190-2191 2192-2193 2194-2195 2196-2197 2198-2199 2200-2201 2202-2203 2204-2205 2206-2207 2208-2209 2210-2211 2212-2213 2214-2215 2216-2217 2218-2219 2220-2221 2222-2223 2224-2225 2226-2227 2228-2229 2230-2231 2232-2233 2234-2235 2236-2237 2238-2239 2240-2241 2242-2243 2244-2245 2246-2247 2248-2249 2250-2251 2252-2253 2254-2255 2256-2257 2258-2259 2260-2261 2262-2263 2264-2265 2266-2267 2268-2269 2270-2271 2272-2273 2274-2275 2276-2277 2278-2279 2280-2281 2282-2283 2284-2285 2286-2287 2288-2289 2290-2291 2292-2293 2294-2295 2296-2297 2298-2299 2300-2301 2302-2303 2304-2305 2306-2307 2308-2309 2310-2311 2312-2313 2314-2315 2316-2317 2318-2319 2320-2321 2322-2323 2324-2325 2326-2327 2328-2329 2330-2331 2332-2333 2334-2335 2336-2337 2338-2339 2340-2341 2342-2343 2344-2345 2346-2347 2348-2349 2350-2351 2352-2353 2354-2355 2356-2357 2358-2359 2360-2361 2362-2363 2364-2365 2366-2367 2368-2369 2370-2371 2372-2373 2374-2375 2376-2377 2378-2379 2380-2381 2382-2383 2384-2385 2386-2387 2388-2389 2390-2391 2392-2393 2394-2395 2396-2397 2398-2399 2400-2401 2402-2403 2404-2405 2406-2407 2408-2409 2410-2411 2412-2413 2414-2415 2416-2417 2418-2419 2420-2421 2422-2423 2424-2425 2426-2427 2428-2429 2430-2431 2432-2433 2434-2435 2436-2437 2438-2439 2440-2441 2442-2443 2444-2445 2446-2447 2448-2449 2450-2451 2452-2453 2454-2455 2456-2457 2458-2459 2460-2461 2462-2463 2464-2465 2466-2467 2468-2469 2470-2471 2472-2473 2474-2475 2476-2477 2478-2479 2480-2481 2482-2483 2484-2485 2486-2487 2488-2489 2490-2491 2492-2493 2494-2495 2496-2497 2498-2499 2500-2501 2502-2503 2504-2505 2506-2507 2508-2509 2510-2511 2512-2513 2514-2515 2516-2517 2518-2519 2520-2521 2522-2523 2524-2525 2526-2527 2528-2529 2530-2531 2532-2533 2534-2535 2536-2537 2538-2539 2540-2541 2542-2543 2544-2545 2546-2547 2548-2549 2550-2551 2552-2553 2554-2555 2556-2557 2558-2559 2560-2561 2562-2563 2564-2565 2566-2567 2568-2569 2570-2571 2572-2573 2574-2575 2576-2577 2578-2579 2580-2581 2582-2583 2584-2585 2586-2587 2588-2589 2590-2591 2592-2593 2594-2595 2596-2597 2598-2599 2600-2601 2602-2603 2604-2605 2606-2607 2608-2609 2610-2611 2612-2613 2614-2615 2616-2617 2618-2619 2620-2621 2622-2623 2624-2625 2626-2627 2628-2629 2630-2631 2632-2633 2634-2635 2636-2637 2638-2639 2640-2641 2642-2643 2644-2645 2646-2647 2648-2649 2650-2651 2652-2653 2654-2655 2656-2657 2658-2659 2660-2661 2662-2663 2664-2665 2666-2667 2668-2669 2670-2671 2672-2673 2674-2675 2676-2677 2678-2679 2680-2681 2682-2683 2684-2685 2686-2687 2688-2689 2690-2691 2692-2693 2694-2695 2696-2697 2698-2699 2700-2701 2702-2703 2704-2705 2706-2707 2708-2709 2710-2711 2712-2713 2714-2715 2716-2717 2718-2719 2720-2721 2722-2723 2724-2725 2726-2727 2728-2729 2730-2731 2732-2733 2734-2735 2736-2737 2738-2739 2740-2741 2742-2743 2744-2745 2746-2747 2748-2749 2750-2751 2752-2753 2754-2755 2756-2757 2758-2759 2760-2761 2762-2763 2764

PREMIER LEAGUE

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Do the United Kingdom's leaders
try to push United all the way
to the end? No, it is not a
case of German domination and
control. Of course, there are
many other factors at work
in the American approach to
China, but the basic reality is
that the United States is

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Talking Turkey

EXCLUSIVE: Australian coach reveals how he followed **MILE JEDINAK'S** progress from junior to senior level

WORDS *Up to you*

I don't know what it's like to be a woman who's loved a few men, but I must have been a little bit like that. The game was pretty much over for me, though it probably comforted me, was happy for me, and a great way to spend my minutes and I did that for a great number of years and have issued a letter to George.

BEING NOTICED



👊👊 He doesn't just win tackles, he can play football, he can knock long balls, he can score from distance. Going to Turkey he will improve again. 🇹🇷🇹🇷

— Lawrie McKinnna

reach this point. What seemed like a punt by Mariners coach Larsen McKinnis in 2006/07, in the end paid dividends, but according to McKinnis, this is in part due to the commitment and perseverance of Jedinak himself.

"He made his A-League debut midway through the second season and did a good job, but he just got better and better," McKinnis says. "It didn't come on a plate for him. He was a bit of a Man Simon, coming up three days a week and not getting paid. But he buckled himself, he kept training with us for months and thought, 'I'll have a go and hopefully something comes of this.'"

While Vince Grella and Jason Catina are Tim Verbeek's main defensive anchors, Jedinak would now see himself on par with Grosset's Carl Valeri. For McKinnis, Jedinak's all-round game is his greatest asset.

"He doesn't just win tackles, he can play football, he can knock long balls, he can score from distance and he can take free kicks – he demonstrated that this season," he says. "He's 24 and he's still getting better and I still think he can get better because he works hard and has a fantastic attitude, and going to Turkey he will improve again."

SMOOTH TRANSITION

Ankara is no Ghostland, but in Fikri and Djije Jedinak has teammates who have made his move to a foreign league a lot easier. The language barrier (very few players and officials speak English in Turkey) makes it even harder for Australians to settle.

Jojo Stokic, Mile Sterjovski and Nick Cardle all only lasted briefly in the Turkish capital, where the training

schedule is also said to be more demanding than at most clubs. Only Michael Bosovic (Sivasspor) and Umit Talay, who is of Turkish descent, have bucked the trend and had lengthy stints there.

As soon as he arrived in Turkey Jedinak went straight to a training camp and then stayed at Djije's home upon returning. By the time he debuted, he still hadn't had time to search for his own place to live, something that made his successful transition all the more rewarding.

"I haven't had much time in Ankara. When I played my first game I had only been there for four days out of three weeks, the rest was spent at our training camp," he says. "I didn't have much time to do anything, but now that everything's settled in, it gives me more time to do things."

"But it's been relatively smooth and things will get sorted in the coming weeks."

Genclerbirligi's track record with Australians would



suggest Jedinak might be wiser to rent rather than buy a property. Very much a selling club, Genclerbirligi never stood in the way if an offer is reasonable – or very reasonable by world football standards, where some clubs hold players and potential employers to ransom. And if their new No. 23 progresses at the rate he did at the Mariners, it would seem he is likely to move onwards and upwards in the near future. **SB**

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Tackles made



Sergio van Dijk
(Queensland Roar)

39 42 48.1

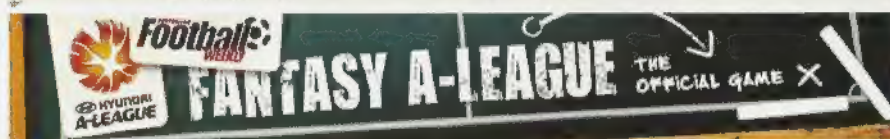


Matt McKay
(Queensland Roar)

109

Danny Allsopp (Victory)	37	28	56.9
Matt Simon (Mariners)	28	17	62.2
Travis Dodd (Adelaide)	27	23	54.0
Joel Griffiths (Jets)	24	20	54.5
Sasho Petrovski (Mariners)	24	22	52.2
Archie Thompson (Victory)	23	18	56.1
Carlos Hernandez (Victory)	23	31	42.6
Cristiano (Adelaide)	21	11	65.6
Nikita Rukavytsya (Glory)	20	15	57.1

Kevin Muscat (Victory)	106
Bradley Porter (Mariners)	86
Roddy Vargas (Victory)	86
Pedj Bojic (Mariners)	84
Tarek Elrich (Jets)	80
Jamie Coyne (Glory)	79
Mile Jedinak (Mariners)	77
Shannon Cole (Sydney)	76
Scott Jamieson (Adelaide)	75



FOX SPORTS

FANTASY A-LEAGUE

IT'S finals time in Australian Football Weekly's fantasy A-League comp.

After a weekend of frantic transfer activity, the title of champion is still up for grabs, although Rhett Fraser and Andrew Applehof look to be splitting from the pack.

Meanwhile, Joey Surace's Benchwarmers creep into the top 10, with ed Dave's Creator Supremes hot on his heels. Can he crack it?

As for senior writer Tom's Albion Down Under... Well, yes. They are a bit.

You can still ruin things for everyone by signing up at footballweekly.aleaguefantasy.foxsports.com.au



AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL WEEKLY LADDER FINALS WEEK 1

POS	TEAM	SCORE	TOTAL
1	New Zealand Knights Rhett Fraser	56	736
2	dalby ruine Andrew Appelhof	48	730
3	Mean Machine Jon Pronger	57	719
4	Koolewong Glory Chris Lawrence	49	713
5	Rabbitsborough FC Matthew Cox	41	710
6	fcp Lyndall Hall	44	707
7	Tommy Burns YNWA Nick Toulantas	46	706
8	Criminally Talented Justin Civitillo	46	705
9	Victoryman Ben Gogos	40	704
10	Benchwarmers Joey Surace	50	703
And still with hope (almost)...			
11	Creator Supremes Dave Hall	50	697
48	Albion Down Under Thomas Woodgate	47	627

WELCOME TO THE CASTLE

FOXSPORTS
STATS

They say a man's home is his castle – but not in the Hyundai A-League finals series, it seems. All the glory in the first week of the finals went to the away teams, yet these victories come on the back of a home-and-away season that featured the fewest away-team wins of any thus far in the course of the A-League. What surprised could those second legs hold...



Season	Home-and-away games	Games won by away team	Away team winning %
2005/06	84	35	41.7%
2006/07	84	26	31%
2007/08	84	29	34.5%
2008/09	84	20	23.8%

RED ROADKILL?

Needless to say, last weekend's events have left Central Coast Mariners and Adelaide United with considerable mountains to climb this week as they travel to Suncorp Stadium and Telstra Dome respectively. Like Mariners, the Reds have to score at least twice on the road this weekend to have any hope in their tie. But given Adelaide's horrendous record this season when it comes to scoring (or to be more accurate, not scoring) in away games this season, perhaps all hope is already lost.

FEWEST GOALS SCORED AWAY FROM HOME IN A HOME-AND-AWAY SEASON

	NEW ZEALAND KNIGHTS Season: 2005/06 Away goals:	4
	NEW ZEALAND KNIGHTS Season: 2006/07 Away goals:	5
	ADELAIDE UNITED Season: 2008/09 Away goals:	6
	PERTH GLORY Season: 2006/07 Away goals:	7
	ADELAIDE UNITED Season: 2006/07 Away goals:	7

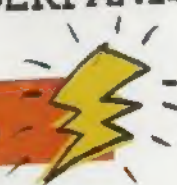
2ND-6TH MARCH

DAREDALLION WEEK



THIS GUY WEARS HIS UNDERPANTS
ON THE OUTSIDE.

WHAT A LEGEND.



What would you dare to do
for men's cancers?

By accepting the Daredallion Week challenge you're declaring to the world that you, Sir, are a bloody legend. One who will wear a mankini over his suit, break into song on the train or challenge the IT guy to a dance-off in the boardroom.

This March, it's your chance.

Sign up for Daredallion Week (March 2nd-6th) and you'll not only have the perfect excuse for a bit of fun, you'll be raising money for men's cancers by daring yourself, your friends and your colleagues to go out on a limb.

So go on - let loose and do your bit for men's cancers.
Be a Daredallion legend.

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